

Patient information

Care of the child in a hip spica

A hip spica is a plaster or synthetic cast that is applied to immobilise and protect the hip joint and thigh bone (femur) during the healing process after injury or surgery. It extends from just below the rib cage to the foot on the affected side and sometimes part of the way down the other leg.

Bathing and toileting

The cast and the padding under the cast need to be kept dry. A strip wash instead of a bath is necessary. Do not put lotions or talcum powder under the cast.

Frequent nappy changes are also necessary to prevent the cast getting wet / soiled. A mini night time disposable nappy, with the sticky tabs cut off, can be easily pushed underneath the cast and a larger nappy can be placed on the outside of the cast. Positioning the child with head and upper body slightly elevated will encourage the flow of urine away from the cast and into the nappy.

Equipment such as bottles and slipper bed pans can be provided to the older child who is out of nappies.

Moving and handling

A child in a hip spica will be heavier and an awkward shape to lift, so protect your back by using safe lifting techniques.

The main difficulty which the cast creates is that there is no bend in the waist. Extra pillows will be needed for support and positioning. A beanbag is useful as it can be moulded around the child.

A special hip spica chair and table which enables the child to sit upright, astride a padded bar, may be available. Using this does depend on the age and size of the child.

Please check that the car seat is big enough to accommodate the cast. A rolled up towel placed at the back may be useful to improve fit and positioning in the car seat, similarly in a push chair or buggy. Wheelchair hire can be arranged for the older child.

Please note: If the cast has a bar between the legs this is a spacer to hold position or to give additional strength to the cast and should not be used as a lifting aid.

Diet

Small meals and snacks are best as there is not much space around the tummy for a large meal. Do watch for constipation and adjust diet accordingly by increasing fluids and fruit. Take care not to get food or drink down the front of the cast as this can become uncomfortable. No bare-chested eating!

Clothing

The cast acts like a layer of insulation so use less bedding and clothes, but the feet may be cold due to immobility therefore, socks should be worn.

Larger sizes of clothes will be needed. Dresses and all in one vests with poppers between the legs are easier, but shorts and trousers can be used with side opening (Velcro® is very useful).

For more information

If you have any problems with the cast please telephone:

Plaster room on 01284 713309, Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm

Out of hours emergencies please contact: Accident and Emergency on 01284 713739

For other information please contact the consultants secretary on 01284 713294.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)
<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>

