

# Splint Care - Leg

## Definition

- A splint is a padded piece of fiberglass or plaster
- Also called a half cast
- It's placed on only one side of an injured leg
- The splint is held in place by an elastic wrap (bandage)

## Health Information

### Splint Purpose

- Protect a fracture or torn ligament until the swelling has gone down. Most often that is 4 to 7 days after the injury occurs. Then a full cast can be put on if needed.
- Splints also reduce pain because movement increases pain.

### Tight Splints

- A tight splint can reduce blood flow to the toes. It can also pinch a nerve.
- Main symptoms of a tight splint are numbness, tingling or increased pain. Other symptoms are color changes (bluish or pale) or swelling of the toes.
- A tight elastic wrap (bandage) that holds the splint in place is the main cause. The symptoms will go away if the wrap is taken off and then applied less tightly.

## Care Advice

### 1. Fracture Symptoms - Overview:

- Fractures are quite painful. The pain is worst the first 3-4 days after the injury.
- It slowly improves over the first 2 weeks. By then the bones have joined together.
- The most helpful way to reduce pain is elevation and pain medicines.
- A fracture takes 4-6 weeks to heal all the way.

### 2. Pain Medicine:

- To help with fracture pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen.
- Ibuprofen works well for this type of pain.
- Give pain meds for at least the first 48 hours. Then use as needed.

### 3. Elevate the Injured Part:

- Elevate often during the first 3 days after putting on the splint. Then use it for any numbness, tingling or pain of the toes.
- Reason: reduce the amount of swelling that occurs with fractures or other injuries.
- Lie down. Raise the leg by resting the heel on pillows.
- Also wiggle the toes to improve blood flow.

4. **Numbness and Tingling from a Tight Splint:**
  - Watch for symptoms of a splint that is too tight.
  - Numbness, tingling and pain of the toes may occur. Other symptoms are swelling or a color change of the toes. This means the elastic bandage is too tight.
  - Remove the elastic wrap.
  - Do NOT take off the hard splint. Hold it in place with your hand.
  - Wait for the symptoms to go away. That may take up to 30 minutes.
  - Re-wrap it less tightly this time.
5. **Rough Edge on a Splint:**
  - If an edge of the splint is rough, it can cause pain or redness.
  - You can file it down with an emery board (nail file).
  - You can also cover the edge with duct tape.
6. **Keep the Splint Dry:**
  - Don't get the splint wet.
  - Wet cotton padding under a splint can cause skin rashes or itching.
  - Wet plaster can become soft, crumble or crack.
  - If it becomes wet, blow-dry the splint with a hair dryer. Use a low setting. Caution: Hot air can cause burns.
7. **Bathing with a Splint:**
  - To avoid getting the splint wet, enclose it in a plastic bag for bathing.
  - Close the upper part of the plastic with tape or an elastic strap.
  - You can also buy a waterproof sleeve at some drugstores.
  - Use a bathtub. Reason: it's harder to keep a splint dry in a shower.
  - Younger children may need to be given a sponge bath with a washcloth and basin of water.
  - Don't dunk the splint in bath water even though it's covered.
  - Cover the splint in plastic when it's raining.
8. **Activities Allowed with a Splint:**
  - Children with splints can go to school and play with friends.
  - Light exercise is fine after the first week.
  - Do not ride a bike, climb anything or play any contact sports.
  - Reason: you might fall and re-break the healing bones.
  - Avoid swimming.
  - Follow your doctor's advice about walking with a leg splint. You may need crutches or a walker.

## Call Your Doctor If

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- Toe pain, numbness or tingling doesn't go away in 1 hour after loosening elastic wrap
- Toes become pale or bluish and doesn't go away with loosening the wrap
- Splint cracks or become soft
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

### **Pediatric Care Advice**

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