

HSS



**Lerner Children's
Pavilion**

Spica Cast Care

**A Guide to Taking Care of Your Child's
Spica Cast at Home**



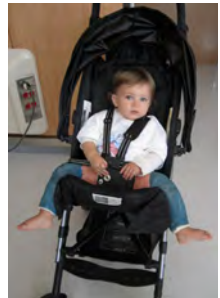
What is a spica cast?

A spica cast is a cast that extends from the upper part of your child's chest to the lower extremities.

The spica cast is placed on your child by the surgeon in the operating room.

Items You Will Need

- ☐ The hospital physical therapist will help you determine the equipment that would work best for your child, such as a reclining wheelchair, wagon, or stroller.
- ☐ A special car seat with a wider base may be necessary for your child. The hospital team will discuss options with you.
- ☐ Diapers, sanitary napkins, and incontinence pads for infants and toddlers
- ☐ A bedpan and urinal for older children
- ☐ A hairdryer with a cool setting
- ☐ Moleskin to reinforce any cast edges



*The Wallenberg
Hip Cast Car Seat
by Merritt*

Strollers and Wheelchairs

- Smaller children may fit in a stroller or a wagon using pillows and a seatbelt.
- A jogger stroller is wider and can be used for larger infants and toddlers.
- For older children, you may rent a reclining wheelchair in advance of your discharge from the hospital. The Social Work team at HSS can help you order this. Speak to your doctor or nurse for assistance.



Caring for the Skin

- Check the toes for swelling, discoloration, movement, and temperature 3-4 times a day.
- Check your child's skin every day, especially under the edges of the cast. Use a flashlight to provide more light, and carefully look for reddened areas under the cast.
- Feel for blisters or sores under the edges of the cast.
- Check the cast daily for cracks and for a change in the amount of room your child has between the skin and the cast.

Bathing

- Daily sponge baths are recommended. Using a lightly damp wash cloth, gently cleanse the skin under the cast. This is a good chance to carefully examine the skin for any sores or abrasions.
- Do not use lotions or powders on your child's skin near the cast edges or inside the cast.

Itching

- If your child has unbearable itching, you may give Benadryl®. If this does not help, call your child's doctor.
- You may use a hair dryer on a **cool** or **cold** setting to blow cool air under the cast edges to help relieve itching.
- Warm and hot settings can cause burns.

Keeping Your Child Comfortable

- Make sure your child's back is supported, so your child does not slip down inside the cast. Also, keeping your child's upper body and head elevated during sleep allows gravity to help direct urine into the diaper rather than pooling in the cast. You can also prop your child on pillows or elevate the entire head of the crib mattress.



- You may use a rubber wedge to prop up your child (as shown above).
- A beanbag chair is also useful. It molds to your child and you can place them in almost any position, from reclining to more upright. Smaller beanbags can be used for support.
- Turn your child from front to back or side to side every two to four hours during the day, and as often as you can during the night. For children under one year of age, current American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines recommend sleeping on the back until one year of age.
- If your child prefers to sleep on their belly, you may place a pillow beneath the hip/thigh area and under their chest. This helps to prevent muscle spasms in the groin area while sleeping.
- Make sure your child is always supervised while they are in these positions.



Safety Tips

- Your child's surgeon may place a bar between the legs of their cast.

DO NOT USE THE BAR TO LIFT YOUR CHILD. THE BAR AND CAST CAN BREAK.

- Always keep side rails up on cribs.
- Always use seat belts for safety when your child is in an automobile, stroller/wheelchair or high chair.
- Do not allow your child to stick any objects (i.e., coat hangers, pencils, coins, erasers, etc.) under the cast because it may injure the skin.
- Keep a bib or t-shirt over the cast to prevent small objects, such as toy parts, coins, or crumbs from getting into the cast.
- When lifting, carrying, or repositioning your child, make sure to support the underside of the cast and never lift them from their arms.

If an object falls down into the cast, please call your surgeon's office immediately.

School

- If your child attends school in New York City, the HSS social worker or case manager will need to initiate a referral to the NYC Board of Education.
 - If your child attends school outside of New York City, contact your child's school to make arrangements for home study/tutor.
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Diet

- As your child will be less active while in the spica cast, constipation may become a problem.
- Offer your child a variety of fiber-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grain breads and cereals to prevent constipation. Also encourage plenty of water and extra fluids.
- Smaller, more frequent meals are recommended.

Clothing

- It may take a few tries to find clothes that will fit over the spica cast.
- Most shirts and dresses will fit over the cast. Large sweat pants can usually be worn as well.
- If your child is toilet-trained, underpants can be altered to have a velcro closure on the side.



Using a Bedpan

- Position your child onto the bedpan so the urine or stool flows directly into the bedpan.
- A paper towel or extra toilet paper at the back of the bedpan can help absorb any stray droplets.
- When your child has finished using the bedpan, dry the skin completely and use a baby wipe as necessary.

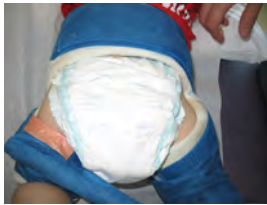
Using a toilet may be possible in older children.



Diapering



- Tuck a small diaper inside the cast. Place a large diaper on top.
- You will need to check and change your child's diaper more frequently to keep the cast dry.



Call Your Doctor If You Notice Any of the Following:

- Bluish discoloration of the toes or feet
- Inability to move toes or feet
- Cast badly stained with stool
- Cast soaked with urine
- Skin irritation around or under the cast
- Cracked or broken cast, areas of softening
- Foul odor coming from the cast, any drainage, or staining
- Cast is too tight or too loose
- An object falls inside of the cast
- Your child is more fussy or irritable than usual, and you cannot find a reason for it

Call your doctor's office for any problems or concerns.

If it is after regular office hours, the on-call physician will be contacted immediately.

For additional information about caring for your child in a spica cast:



spicalife.com



www.hss.edu/conditions_how-to-care-for-child-in-spica-cast.asp



www.hss.edu/conditions_developmental-dysplasia-of-the-hip-ddh.asp



hss.edu/peds

Hospital for Special Surgery is an affiliate of NewYork-Presbyterian Healthcare System and Weill Cornell Medical College.

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