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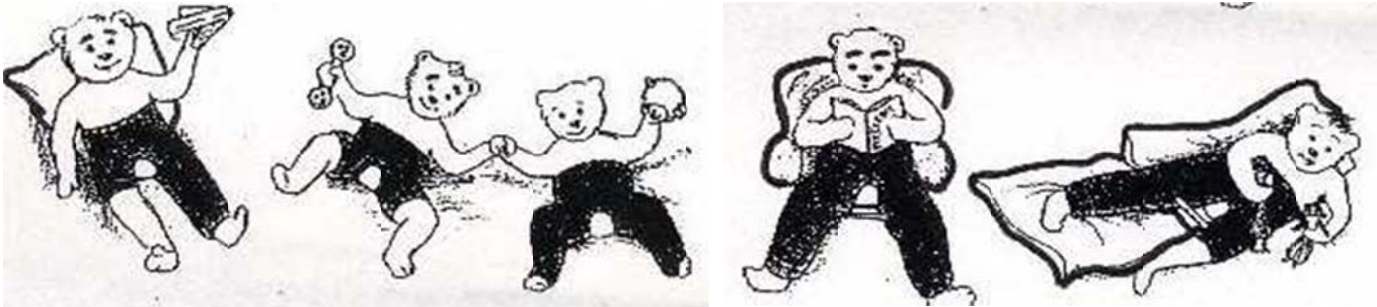
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SPICA CAST CARE

This information teaches you about cast care, bathing and skin care, diapering, positioning your child, safety and comfort measures, helpful hints, and when to call the doctor.



What is a spica cast?

A spica cast is a cast that covers the body. It starts at the chest from the nipples, goes around the waist and hips, and continues down the legs. It has an opening cut out for diapering or toilet use. The type of cast depends on the problem being treated.

What is a spica cast used for?

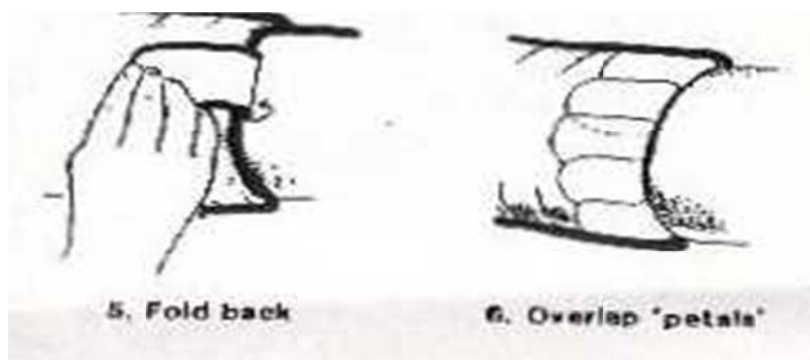
A hip spica cast may be applied after different types of hip or leg surgeries, tendon releases, or a broken bone. It serves a very specific purpose: to immobilize the hip(s) and legs, and to maintain the correct position for healing. The cast may seem large and awkward, but you will learn how to take care of your child in the spica.

How do I take care of my child in the spica cast?

- It is extremely important to keep the cast clean and dry. Skin sore or diaper rash can occur beneath the edges of the cast from a wet or soiled diaper, or if urine and bowel movements are allowed to remain in contact with your child's skin. It is very important that all precautions be taken to prevent skin irritation. In addition, if the cast gets wet, it may soften or crack and lose its proper position.

Keeping the cast clean:

- The edges of the cast should be covered with waterproof plastic tape. This is especially important around the genital area to help prevent soiling.
- A child who is toilet trained may use a urinal. This works well for boys and girls. Place the urinal snugly against the girl, and let her void into the urinal. A bedpan is used for bowel movements. It may be helpful to place a washcloth between cast and skin to prevent urine from leaking into the cast.
- If a child who is not toilet-trained do not apply the diaper as you normally would. Check for a wet or soiled diaper at least every 2 hours during the day, and every 4-8 hours during the night. The diaper should be changed as soon as it becomes wet to prevent the cast from getting wet. If the cast becomes soiled, you may use a slightly dampened (not wet) cloth to clean the area. Afterward, keep the area uncovered until it is completely dried. A blow dryer on the cool or air setting may be used to help dry the cast. If the child is propped up with the head and chest higher than the bottom, this will let the urine run into the diaper and not into the cast.
- To prevent irritating the skin from rough edges on the cast, the cast should be "petaled". Some of the petaling will be done at the hospital, but you may want to have extra materials at home in case they loosen or additional areas need to be covered. You can obtain the adhesive, which is called mole skin, from a surgical supply store. The petaling technique is shown below.



Skin and cast inspection:

- Check carefully beneath the cast edges morning and evening, and in the diaper area with each cast change. Look for skin redness, irritation, blisters, open or drainage areas, or pressure spots. Check the elbow for chafing. A flashlight may be helpful. Observe the cast for cracks, softening, increasing tightness, drainage from the cast, or foul odors. Contact your doctor if there is a problem.
- If your child complains of tightness, pain, tingling, numbness, inability to move the toes, or there is swelling, try elevating the feet for an hour or more. If the problem persists, contact the office.

How do I change my child's diapers?

Your child's **diaper** should be changed as soon as it becomes wet. It is best to use disposable diapers. They should be tucked deep inside the edges of the cast. Follow the steps below:

Follow these steps. Your child can be positioned on either the stomach or back for diapering.



1
First, tuck a sanitary pad inside the cast over the bottom.

2
Next, place your child's normal size diaper over the pad. Stuff the edges of the diaper inside the edges of the cast. Always keep the waterproof edges of the diaper between the child and the cast.

3
4
5
To keep the diaper and the pad from falling out, place a much larger diaper over the one tucked into the cast. Secure the tabs around the waist of the cast. You can also use a one-piece outfit that snaps or has a velcro closure at the bottom.

How do I bathe my child?

Give your child a sponge bath daily. Be careful not to get the cast wet. Do not use lotions, powders, or oils under the cast or around the edges. This can irritate the skin under the cast. If your child sweats a lot, a dry soft cloth can help absorb sweat. Change it as needed.

Circulation Checks

Check circulation at least 4 times a day. To do this, check the toes. They should stay pink and feel warm. Call the office if your child's toes become more swollen, discolored, or if she/he is unable to move the toes easily.

Positioning

- The position of a child in a spica cast must be changed every 2 hours during the day, and every 6-8 hours during the night to prevent skin problems. Turn your child on his/her back, sides, or stomach. Keep the cast in alignment with the chest and shoulder blades to keep the cast from pressing on them.
- Protect the toes from touching the mattress when your child is on his/her stomach by placing a pillow, rolled towel, or washcloth beneath the ankle.
- Keep heels free from pressure by placing a rolled ankle or small pillow under the calf of the leg.
- The child may sit propped up with cushion or pillow. This will also help in keeping the cast clean and dry. It is also easier for the older child to use the bathroom.
- Your child may figure how to stand or walk in the hip spica cast. Do not allow your child to stand or walk unless instructed by your doctor.

Clothing tips:

- The cast covers most of your child's body. Your child may not need many clothes. Big t-shirts, long nightshirts, or loose dresses work well.
- For older children, hand towels can be used to cover the bottom. Boxer shorts can be pulled up over the cast. Break away parts work great.
- Dresses are usually most comfortable for girls. Large sweatpants or shorts are best for boys.
- Pants, underwear and shorts can be modified to fit. Take the crotch seam out. Pace snaps or Velcro on the seam. The clothing can be pulled over the head.



Helpful hints:

- Since the normal **activity level** of your child will be altered due to the cast, it is very important that he/she be allowed to do as many activities as possible within the specified limitations. If your child must be on bedrest, providing special activities or sources of stimulation for him/her will make this adjustment easier. Here are some suggestions:

- Take your child out for fresh air in a stroller or reclining wheelchair.
- While inside keep your child in a room that is the center of activity.
- Have toys and other items easily within the child's reach.
- Keep your child involved with the family and friends.
- Small children should be held as often as possible, as the closeness will soothe them
- Try to keep the daily activities as close to normal as possible.

Nutrition:

While your child is in the cast, it is important to maintain good **nutrition**. Drinking plenty of water and juices will help prevent constipation or urinary tract infections. Eating small, frequent meals will prevent a tight feeling in the cast from a large, full stomach.

Safety and comfort measures

- Do not let your child place small toys, or other objects, or food inside the cast. This may cause pressure areas and skin breakdown. It will make it more difficult to put things inside the cast if your child wears a one-piece type outfit or a long t-shirt.
- Your child may complain of itching, especially if he/she is hot and sweaty. Do not poke objects such as coat hangers into the cast. To help itching, use a blow dryer on a cool or air setting, and direct the air inside the cast. If itching still continues, appropriate dose of liquid Benadryl may be given by mouth.
- The child will be most comfortable if kept cool.
- Always have you child strapped in to chairs, beds, car seats and strollers.
- Put a large smock or shirt on your child that extends down over the cast before he/she eats. This will prevent food and crumbs from falling down into the cast.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

- Severe pain, numbness or burning inside or below the cast that is not relieved with elevation.
- Unexplained fever over 101 degrees.
- A new stain on the cast coming from the inside.
- A crack in the cast.
- A very foul odor coming from inside the cast.
- An object lost or lodged in the cast.
- Very cold or discolored toes on the leg with the cast.
- Broken or blistered skin around the cast edges.