

Caring for a child in a hip spica

Information and advice for parents and carers

Physiotherapy

What is a hip spica?

A hip spica is a plaster cast that prevents children from moving their broken leg, which helps their bones to heal in the correct position. Your child may have both legs in plaster (full or half legs) or they may only have just the affected leg in plaster. They may or may not have a broomstick cast which is a plaster bar between the legs.

Washing your child

The cast must stay dry at all times so your child must not have a bath or shower whilst in the hip spica. Instead you should give them a sponge bath (clean them using a wet sponge/cloth).

You can lean them over the bath to shower their hair.

Toileting

If your child is still in nappies they will need to have a small one tucked into the cast and a larger nappy over the top. These will need to be worn 24 hours a day and checked frequently. If your child normally uses the toilet, then they may use a bed pan or a bottle instead.

Clothing

Larger sized clothes (especially socks) should be worn over the cast to ensure your child remains warm.

Looking after the cast

- The cast must stay dry at all times
- Keep the cast clean and cover it with a towel when your child is eating.
- Check the cast daily for cracks and dents
- Do not lean or push down on the cast or it will break.
- Do not use cream or talcum powder around or inside the cast.
- Check regularly that your child has not hidden small toys in the plaster.

Looking after your child's skin

- Look daily at the skin to ensure there are no rubs, blisters or sores, especially at the areas around the edges of the cast (knees, ankles and under their arms).
- Check your child's toes frequently —they should be pink, warm and not swollen and they should be able to wriggle them.
- Keep your child's nails short as their skin may become dry and itchy and they may want to scratch it.

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Positioning your child and keeping them comfortable

Your child will not be able to sit up straight whilst they are in the hip spica so you need to keep their head and upper body in a half-sitting position at all times.

You can support them with pillows behind their head and shoulders. Beanbags are really useful as they mould around the child and their spica, provide support and are comfortable. You should always keep their feet/heels off the bed—use a rolled up towel or pillow under their knees.

You should change your child's position every few hours. The alternative position is lying on their front; this will relieve pressure on their buttocks, heels, shoulders and elbows. They will also enjoy playing in this position.

Lifting your child

Your child will be heavier and you may find it more difficult to pick them up; holding them close to you will make this easier. Keep your back straight and bend your knees slightly when moving your child to prevent any injury to yourself. Make sure you are supporting their legs and back whenever you are moving them.

If your child has a plaster bar between their leg do not use this to lift your child up. It will likely break and may cause your child injury.

Travelling with your child

Your child cannot walk or stand while in the hip spica so it is advisable to use a buggy/ pushchair to move them around.

Please bring their car seat onto the ward as soon as possible to ensure your child fits safely, otherwise we will need to arrange hospital transport to take them home from hospital.

Unfortunately specialist equipment can not be provided by the hospital, however there is information provided on the websites we have recommended (see back page for more details).

School

Your child may or may not be able to attend school when in plaster. You need to discuss this with school to find out if they can accommodate your child or to ensure home study can be arranged. If your child's school have any concerns then they can contact the physiotherapy team (please see back page for contact numbers).

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Activity

Your child may become bored and frustrated during their time in plaster. Books, films, board games and video games may help relieve this. A change of environment i.e. outdoors can also help.

Others caring for your child

It is important that any other people caring for your child i.e. babysitters, grandparents, nursery nurses, teachers etc have the knowledge and ability to care for your child whilst in a hip spica.

When to seek help

- your child has unexplained crying
- they have itching that wont stop
- there is a bad smell from the cast
- they have any redness on their skin, a sore or a blister
- an item becomes stuck in the cast
- your child's toes become blue, cold, numb, tingly or very swollen

For any of these problems contact the ward your child was on or the Accident and Emergency Department

Contact details

If you have any other questions or concerns you can contact the ward your child was on or a physiotherapist:

Lyndon One

0121 507 3800

Lyndon Ground

0121 507 3717

Ward D19

0121 507 4019

Physiotherapy

0121 554 3801 and ask for bleep 5833 or 5212

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Further information

STEPS

Information, guidance and financial assistance when caring for a child in a hip spica

www.steps-charity.org.uk

Helpline: 01925 750 271

In Car Safety Centre

For specialist car seats for children with hip spica casts

www.incarsafetycentre.co.uk

01908 220 909

Radcliffe Rehab

For specialist car seats for children with hip spica casts

www.radclifferehab.co.uk

01280 700 256

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website:

www.swbh.nhs.uk

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net



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