

Waterproof Casts

After your child has been diagnosed with a fracture and the appropriate treatment is recommended, you start to wonder about how this will all affect your child's regular daily activities. One question is usually at the top of the list – especially during the summer months -- “can we have a waterproof cast?” The answer is, “it depends.”

Waterproof cast material is applied as an under layer of padding before the outer layer of fiberglass is applied. This waterproof material is able to dry following exposure to water, but will lose some of its shape and thickness over time. Certain fractures are unstable and are predisposed displacement if there is too much motion within the cast; these types of fractures are best treated in the more standard *non-waterproof* cast. Still other fractures about the hand and wrist are more amenable to various *non-removable non-waterproof* splinting. If you have a desire for a waterproof cast, you should ask your doctor at the time of the original visit, before the cast is applied. Your doctor will let you know if he thinks your child would be a good candidate for this type of cast.

There is also the consideration of cost for some families. Most insurances will only cover the cost of a standard non-waterproof cast. The additional cost of applying a waterproof cast is \$40 although this price is subject to change.

If your child is ultimately treated with a waterproof cast, there are still some rules to follow. Your child should swim in a pool and avoid the beach. Any material, such as sand, that goes into the cast may cause irritation or worse. Remember, your child still has a fracture and should avoid rough housing in the pool. After swimming or showering your child should allow time for the cast material to thoroughly dry. Using a blow dryer on a **cool** setting can help with this process. As with any cast, never stick anything down the cast, even to scratch the area as this could cause skin injury.

If your child is treated with a non-waterproof cast, the cast must be kept dry. Your child should stay away from pool areas as the temptation of water is strong, and nearby children can often times foil your best efforts. There are devices on the market to keep casts dry; most of these do not work well. These devices -- or alternatively a newspaper plastic bag and rubber band -- may be worn for showers only; however, the arm should *still* be held up and out of the shower to avoid leaking. If a standard non-waterproof cast gets soaked it is ruined, and it must be changed over the next day or two to avoid skin irritation or breakdown. Please see cast care link for further instructions regarding cast care.