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## CARE AFTER CAST REMOVAL

Broken (fractured) bones heal differently in each person, so usually patients are only put into a cast for

4-8 weeks depending on injury. By this time, the bone has had time to lay down a thick layer of new bone called "callus" around the fracture to hold it in place. You may be able to see and/or feel this hard "knot" or "bump" of the callus. Over the next several months, the bone continues to heal, removing the rough edges, remaking the hard-outer covering and the marrow inside, and removing the extra layers of callus. During this "remodeling", the body can straighten the fractured bone by laying new bone on the inside edge and taking away bone on the outside of the angled area. In young children, bones can remodel fairly large angles, healing to appear completely normal within one to two years.

- It is normal for there to be some discomfort in the muscles and joints that were immobilized. It is not unusual for an arm or leg to be smaller than the other side. Begin gentle range of motion and strengthening of your injured area after the cast removed. You may be placed into a removable splint after the cast is removed.
- It is not unusual for the skin to have some changes (dry skin and more hair). A few baths in warm water will soak off the dry, flaky skin. This may take a few days but be patient and avoid scrubbing the skin. Scrubbing may damage the new skin. If the area is itching, do not scratch with your fingertips; use your open palm to gently rub over it. You may also apply some lotion to soften the skin, if desired. The hair will return to normal over several months. Do not shave the area for at least three days.
- You may be required to continue to use crutches, cane, or walker after the cast is removed.
- Your doctor will give you specific instructions on the amount of time that these activities should be avoided.
- It is not uncommon for patients to limp for a few weeks after a leg cast is removed (up to a year for a thigh/femur fracture). A child may limp with or without pain. If the limping becomes worse, not better, over the first 2 weeks, or if the pain persists, you should return to be rechecked.

As you progress out of your cast, physical therapy may be beneficial to help you to return to normal everyday activities, work, or even sports activities. Contact your doctor if you feel that it is necessary.