

Itchy skin under cast ^[1]

Alice — I recently got a cast on my leg for a broken ankle. I have to keep it on for approximately three weeks... I had a cast on my arm a long time ago and I remember the itching it causes. Boy do I remember the itching! Is there anything I can do to remedy this before it starts??? Help...

Answer

Dear Reader,

Talk about an irritating situation! Luckily, there are a couple of ways to properly take care of your cast and relieve any itching underneath. But first — resist the urge to scratch the skin under the cast, either with fingers or objects. This can cause the skin to tear and make it more prone to infection, leading to a longer and more complicated healing process.

In order to take care of your cast and the skin underneath, it may help to focus on cleanliness and comfort. One effective way to reduce itching is to blow cool air into the cast. One option is to put a hair dryer on the “cold” setting and then aim it towards the itchy skin. This might also help in case your cast gets wet. However, avoid blowing hot air as hotter settings can add to the irritation despite seeming more effective at drying. In addition, you might ask your health care provider for an antihistamine to help reduce inflammation and itching. Raising the cast or changing the positioning of your leg may also help “cast off” this discomfort as well.

Along with the previous suggestions, proper hygiene may also help prevention itching and infection. In order to avoid infection, make sure not to scratch the skin or pull the padding out of your cast, and try to keep lotions, dirt, sand, and powder from getting inside of your cast as these can cause further irritation. If you’re working or playing outside, you may want to cover the cast to avoid dirt or other irritants from getting into it. Finally, trimming or breaking off itchy pieces of the cast are best left to a professional. If you have any other questions regarding your cast care, you may want to contact your health care provider, who can provide more individualized advice.

Here’s to happy (and itch-free) healing!

Alice!

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