

Cast removal

Competency, skills and knowledge is required to remove casts.

Good technique must be employed when removing any type of cast from plaster of paris, synthetic and slabs. The cast saw must be used with respect and care.

Cast removal should be a fairly easy & painless procedure, provided a few points are adhered to. Good technique means do not push the blade in too deep and drag the blade along. Leaving the blade in one position too long can cause the blade to overheat and burn the patient.

Before removal you must inspect the cast

Is there enough padding or is the padding only on the edges. Check if the padding is bunched up causing pressure? Unpadded casts need extra care and good judgement when .

Has the patient put anything down the cast to scratch?

How thick or thin is the cast material?

Check if there is blood staining on the cast surface? If so gloves and a mask must be worn when removing. Proper disposal of the cast and cleaning of saw and instruments used.

Follow OHS and Infection control policy.

Check the patient.

Identification and reassurance

Check skin integrity. Colour, warmth, movement and sensation.

Is the patient elderly with delicate tissue paper skin. Great care must be considered. Check colour, warmth, movement and sensation.

Is there swelling or oedema? Care taken as skin will cut easily if taut.

Is there any underlying pathology you need to consider eg: Rheumatoid disease or diabetes.

Is there any exposed pins/wires underneath the cast. If so, mark the position of the wire/pin via the x-ray view so you don't hit them with the cast saw. If the saw hits the wire/pins the cast saw will jump back violently and cause the patient pain.

Pre: removal

Position patient: Raise patient on the bed and keep your back straight with good posture. Ask for assistance if required.

Have all equipment required for cast removal ready and at your finger tips. Saw, Scissors, spreaders, etc. Check equipment is clean and in good working order.

Explain what you are about to do and how the saw works. You can demonstrate on yourself to show how the saw vibrates. Children can be very stressed and frightened. Offer ear plugs.

Removal

Reassure the patient regularly.

Wear protective clothing, gowns eye wear.

Have a firm grip on the saw.

Regularly check the heat of the blade.

Make sure the blade goes in and out of the cast straight and avoid any bony prominences

Use a firm surface to lean on.

If removing synthetic or fibre-glass casts, bi-valve the cast to make for easier removal.

Observe that the neurovascular status of the limb is within normal limits

Provide verbal advice to the patient post removal and document in patient file.

Post removal

Dispose of waste in accordance to waste disposable policy. Clean work surfaces and equipment in accordance with infection control guidelines.

