

## Paediatric Orthopaedics

# Hip Spica care

### What is a hip spica?

A hip spica is a plaster cast which starts from half way down the body (from the tummy), around the hips and extends down both legs. In most cases on the affected side, the plaster will continue down to the ankle. On the unaffected side it will stop just above the knee. It will have a 'letter box' opening for hygiene. Hips spicas are made of a lightweight synthetic material which is very strong but reasonably lightweight and comes in a variety of colours. The purpose of a hip spica is to keep the affected hip in the best position in order for it to develop normally.



Courtesy of steps charity

### Will I still be able to pick my child up when they are in the spica?

Yes, the spicas are extremely strong and durable so you will not cause any harm by carrying your child or moving them around with the spica on. They will be a little heavier but the casting material is lightweight, so it shouldn't mean the child is too heavy to carry. You can carry your child on your hip as normal.

### Will my child be able to move around?

You will be surprised at how mobile your child will be in the spica! They can roll to either side and onto their front with little effort. It has also been known for older children to walk in their spicas although this is not recommended on a regular basis!

## How will I position them?

It is important that your child is well positioned to avoid discomfort and also pressure areas. We recommend a pillow underneath the legs (but not the pelvis) to support the lower leg of the "free" leg and to avoid pressure on the heel of the leg in full plaster. It is important to check the areas where the plaster finishes, around the top, on the tummy and the back and where the plaster finishes on the legs. We recommend that you child has some periods on their tummy to encourage air flow around the plaster. Your Physiotherapist will go through optimum positioning with you at your pre op appointment and also on the day the plaster is put on in hospital.

## Will I be able to use my normal pram or pushchair?

Your child's legs will be wider apart than normal and many car seats and push chairs / buggies will not cater for this. The car seats and buggies that work with hip spicas need to have either **width expanding or low, shallow sides**. The Britax Nordic 2 Way Elite car seat is recommended for use with hip spicas. (see below)

## Is there any other special equipment my child will need?

There is no other specific hip spica equipment; however you may find the following things useful:

Small towels, blankets, cushions, pillows, hip seats. bean bags are often comfortable for your child to lie on as they tend to mould to the position the child is in.



Hip Seat



Bean Bag



Britax Car Seat

## Will I be able to bath my child?

No. Although the plaster material is water resistant, it is not waterproof and if the padding underneath the plaster gets wet, it can cause breakdown of the skin.

Therefore we recommend strip washing only, your nurse on the ward will go through this with you as well.

## What about toileting?

There will be a 'letterbox' opening for hygiene in the plaster. The best method we have found is to cut out the pad of a nappy or use a large sanitary towel and tuck this within the letter box to absorb any soiling. Then use a larger size nappy over the top and around the outside of the plaster. It is important that the skin stays as clean and dry as possible. We therefore recommend that initially you check your child's nappy on a regular basis, such as every couple of hours to ensure they remain dry.

**It is important to contact the hospital if:**

- Your baby is overly distressed
- The skin underneath or around the spica is looking red and sore

**Useful contact numbers:**

The consultant surgeon's secretary: **Tel: 01223 216101 (or ext 2101)**

For physiotherapists: **Tel: 01223 216633 (ext 2633)**

**National Support Group:****STEPS - The National Association for Children with Lower Limb Abnormalities,**

Lymm Court, 11 Eagle Brow, Lymm, Cheshire, WA13 0LP;

Website: [www.steps-charity.org.uk](http://www.steps-charity.org.uk)

**In Car Safety Centre: (Britax Nordic Car Seat, for hire or purchase)**

Tel 01908 220909

WebSite: [www.incarsafetycentre.co.uk](http://www.incarsafetycentre.co.uk)



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For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS Stop Smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

**Help with this leaflet:**

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

[patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

**Document history**

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