

INFORMATION LEAFLETS FOR PARENTS / CARERS OF A CHILD IN A THOMAS SPLINT



What is a Thomas Splint?

A Thomas Splint is a device that is applied to immobilise a leg. It is used in conjunction with skin traction to maintain the correct limb position following some surgeries, and also to immobilise a fractured Femur.

The Thomas Splint will be left on your child until the fracture has healed; this normally takes about 4-6 weeks.

Caring for a Child in a Thomas Splint

- It is important that you give your child regular analgesia, especially for the first few days to ensure that they are kept comfortable.
- It is not possible for your child to walk or stand while the Thomas Splint is in place. The Splinted Leg must be kept straight at all times.
- Ensure that pressure is kept off your child's heels and encourage them to gently reposition themselves with your help.
- It is important that the splinted leg is supported and kept straight at all times during any transfers. Young children may be carried, as long as one of the Carer's arms is underneath the splint supporting the leg at all times. Remember, the Thomas Splint has increased your child's weight so take care when lifting your child.
- Encourage your child to exercise the ankle/foot on the affected leg regularly throughout the day. It is also important that all other limbs are exercised to prevent stiffness.
- It is important for you to familiarise yourself with how the splint normally looks. That way, any changes or problems with the splint can be identified. **If you notice any changes please contact the Plaster CNS immediately.**
- If the bandages / cast around the splint become loose, please contact the Plaster CNS to review the splint.

Circulation Checks

It is important that you monitor your child's leg to ensure there are no problems with their circulation. Observe the toes to ensure they are pink and that your child has good movement and feeling in the affected foot. The foot should also be warm to touch.

Signs and symptoms to observe closely for/ if you notice ANY of the following:

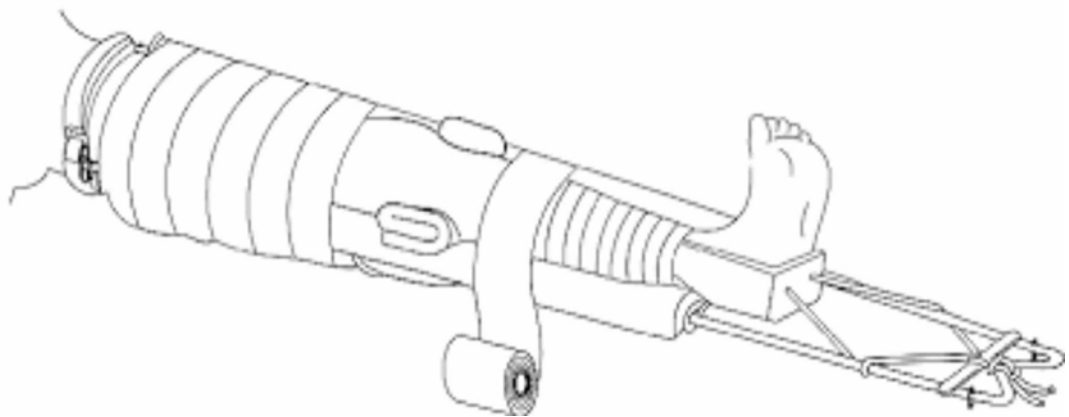
- Swelling of the toes or leg.
- If the toes become blue or white.
- Numbness or Pins and Needles in the toes
- Coldness of the toes
- No relief from pain after taking pain-relieving medicines.
- Reduced/ No movement in the toes.

Please present immediately to the Emergency Department, if any of the above occur.

Skin Care

- It is not possible for your child to bath or shower while in a Thomas splint. The Splint should be kept clean and dry. Your child can be washed using a sponge. Clean as much of the skin as possible around the splint using a gentle soap.
- Ensure the skin under the ring of the Thomas Splint is kept clean and dry.
- You must check the groin area around the top of the ring regularly throughout the day to ensure it is not causing any pressure.
- It is important to observe for any pressure in the groin area from the ring of the splint also.
- Ensure the heels are kept free from pressure.
- **Do not** use lotions, creams or powder near the Thomas Splint as they can make the skin very soft, which can cause irritation to the skin from the splint.
- It is important to check the skin regularly for signs of breakdown or formation of pressure sores.
- Observe for any strong odours coming from the splint, this can be an indication of a problem with your child's skin, and you must be reviewed by the Plaster Nurse.

If you are concerned about your child's skin or if the splint gets wet, please contact the Plaster CNS to review the skin on 01 409 6100 Bleep 8336 or via Voicemail on 01 409 2412.



Toileting

If your child is toilet trained, they can use a bedpan or urinal for toileting. A bedpan can be inserted by turning your child on their unaffected side, or else the child can be lifted up onto the bedpan. You will have been taught by your hospital nurse how to use a bedpan.

If your child wears nappies, they should be changed frequently to prevent soiling of the splint. If the Splint becomes soiled, **please contact the Plaster CNS for review.**

Clothing

- Your child may wear a long T- Shirt or dress over the Thomas splint.
- Shorts may also be worn, but they will need to be adapted. This can be done by splitting them down the side and applying Velcro for fastening.

Eating and Drinking

- Due to reduced mobility, children in a Thomas splint are more prone to constipation. Encourage a healthy fibre rich diet. Please contact the Plaster CNS if you are concerned that your child may be suffering from constipation.

