

## Splints

Your doctor has ordered a splint for your child. A splint holds an arm or a leg in a stretched position and prevents contractures (kon-TRACK-shurs). A contracture is a shortening of muscles or tightening of the skin, usually after an injury. It limits joint movement. Contractures can occur when the injured body part is not being stretched by exercise or held in a stretched position by a splint. Keeping this stretched position is especially important at night because a child tends to curl his arms and legs close to the body during sleep (Picture 1). The occupational therapist will fit your child for the right size splint.

### When to Wear the Splint

Your child should wear the splint(s):

- All the time, except when bathing or exercising.
- Two hours in the morning, 2 hours in the afternoon, and all night.
- At night and for naps only.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_



**Picture 1** To prevent contractures most splints are worn at night because children often curl up when they sleep.

### What to Look For

- When your child stretches to put on the splint, he or she might feel some pain. After the splint has been on about 15 minutes, discomfort should be less. If there is still a lot of pain after 30 minutes, call your occupational therapist.
- After the splint has been removed, you may notice slight dents in the skin, especially where the edges of the splint touch the skin. If these dents do not go away after 30 minutes, leave the splint off and call your child's occupational therapist.
- Thirty minutes after the splint is on, look at and compare:  both hands  both feet. If you see any swelling or if the color of one is darker than the other, remove the splint and call the occupational therapist.

## Care of the Splint

1. Do not put the splint in or near any heat (such as direct sunlight, hot water, near a heater or in a hot car) because the splint will melt.
2. To clean the splint, use rubbing alcohol or soap and cool water. Dry it thoroughly.
3. If your child's splint has straps:
  - Hand-wash the splint with mild soap and water.
  - Check the Velcro<sup>®</sup> for lint. Too much lint will keep the straps from sticking to the Velcro<sup>®</sup>. Pull the lint out of the Velcro<sup>®</sup> with your fingers.
  - If the straps wear out, call the occupational therapist. New straps can be mailed to you.
4. Kerlix<sup>®</sup> or Conform<sup>®</sup> are wraps that may be used instead of straps (Picture 2). At first, the hospital will provide these.



**Picture 2** Splints may be held in place by Kerlix<sup>®</sup> or Velcro<sup>®</sup> straps. Your therapist will tell you which to use.

## Follow-Up Appointments

- Contractures can occur at any time. Although your child may not enjoy having activity restricted by a splint, it is very important for your child to wear the splint as instructed until you are told that it is no longer needed.
- In most cases your child will continue to see the occupational therapist as an outpatient. If you have problems with the splint, please call your child's therapist.
- Please bring the splint to all clinic and office visits.
- Your child's doctor and therapist will tell you when your child can stop using the splint.
- Your occupational therapist is \_\_\_\_\_.

## Other Information

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