

Belly Casting

This pregnancy is such a special time in your lives: you'll never carry this baby or anticipate your first look at her or him again! A belly cast is a three-dimensional memento of your body as your baby grew inside.

Supplies:

Check the internet for belly casting kits. You may prefer to just buy everything you need in just one box or you may find it more economical to assemble your own supplies:

- ✓ Oil, water-soluble jelly; You may also want cotton
- ✓ Plastic tablecloth, old shower curtain or drop cloth
- ✓ Cake pan of warm water for dipping plaster bandages
- ✓ Fast-drying (5 - 8 minutes) plaster bandages (used for casts for broken bones); Can be bought at medical supply stores OR Plaster strips for mask making (Hobby Lobby carries them). Get 2 or 3 inch rolls to cast only breasts and belly. You'll need 12 rolls if you include shoulders upper arms or upper thighs. If you buy 4 or 6 inch rolls, you'll need fewer rolls (but might be more difficult to smooth out).
- ✓ If you want to decorate your cast, you'll need art supplies. Try plaster of Paris (smooths rough gauze surfaces and enhances details such as nipples or belly buttons; also strengthens cast); wire mesh sandpaper to get a really smooth plaster surface; Gesso, paint, colored tissue paper, feathers, beads, pictures or photos to collage, dried flowers. Shellac to seal and preserve your belly cast.

Sculptee (Mom):

Choose a pose that you can hold for 20 minutes. Do you want your legs or arms included? A friend of mine chose to do only her belly and found that it looked like a badly shaped basketball. She had to go back and add her breasts to give some frame of reference. Sitting will make your cast more rounded. Don't lie down or your cast will become too flattened. Celebrate your roundness!

Sculptor:

Put on old clothes or an apron. Protect or remove your jewelry. Protect your workspace floor. The room you choose should be warm and well-ventilated. Cut plaster bandages into strips about 6, 10 and 14 inches long. Generously apply lubricant to the mother's breasts, belly or other to-be-sculpted spots. Go only halfway around her body and stop just above the pubic hair. You may want to use cotton padding to cover body hair: remember, when the cast comes off, so will any hair that is attached!

Sculpt!

1. Fill the pan with warm water.
2. Glide one plaster strip at a time through the water for a few seconds. Never let go of the strip, keep it taut and don't let it fold or twist on itself. On shorter strips, you can gently squeeze out water by running your middle and index fingers down the strip.
3. Apply the strip to Mom's body. Smooth and overlap the strips in various directions to strengthen the belly cast.
4. Work quickly because the plaster will begin to set and the cast begins to separate from the body about 10 - 15 minutes after you begin.
5. The cast will be ready to remove about 5 minutes after you are finished applying the strips. Mothers, you may help to loosen the cast by doing a little "belly dance" as you begin to ease the cast off your body.

You may wish to decorate your belly cast. You may wish to leave it as it is. I have a friend who has hers in her bathroom with an ivy growing over it. Another has covered hers with dried rose petals from the flowers she received in celebration of her baby's birth. Do some internet surfing for inspiration!

Adapted from *Birthing From Within* (England and Horowitz)
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