

USE & CARE OF YOUR NEW PROSTHESIS

Now that you have a new prosthesis, there are a few things you can do to make sure it fits and functions properly for as long as possible. Remember, if you have questions or concerns, we are here to help. Don't hesitate to call us or schedule an appointment if you need assistance.

BREAK-IN

Whether you are getting your first prosthesis, or are a seasoned pro with a new socket, your limb is going to need to acclimate to the pressures of a new socket. The materials haven't broken in, and your limb may get some new pressure in a way it hasn't seen before. This is why we recommend a break-in period. For the first few weeks, you should remove your prosthesis and inspect your skin regularly to ensure you do not develop a sore on your skin. Each day you can increase your wear-time slightly as long as your limb stays healthy and pain-free. This process is similar to a new pair of hiking boots – if you hike the Grand Canyon the first time you ever wear them, you will probably have blisters all over your feet! But, if you break them in slowly for a few weeks, you could probably wear them all day/every day without a problem. If you are a first-time wearer, or are having irritation with your new prosthesis, here is a good schedule to follow:

<u>WEEK</u>	<u>WEAR-TIME</u>	<u>REPEAT</u>	<u>ACTIVITIES</u>
1	1 hr on / 2 hrs off	3-4 times per day	limited walking/standing
2	1 hr on / 1 hr off	4-6 times per day	limited walking/standing
3	2 hrs on / 1 hr off	3-6 times per day	as tolerated
4	as tolerated	as tolerated (check skin)	as tolerated

Always be sure to check your skin once you take your prosthesis off, and discontinue use if you notice any wounds or redness that does not subside within 30 minutes. Remember to put your shrinkers or compression wrap back on your limb when you are not wearing your prosthesis. Eventually your limb will stabilize and you may not need to wear shrinkers any longer.

CLEANING

It is very important to keep your prosthesis clean. Bacteria loves the warm, moist environment created by your limb in the socket which can lead to irritation and strong odors. Once per week you should wipe down the inside of your socket with alcohol. If you have socks with your prosthesis, they can usually be machine-washed (check the packaging for instructions). Some prostheses include gel liners, which will need to be washed after each use. If you use liners or sleeves, check with your prosthetist for detailed instructions – but these parts can usually be washed in the sink or tub with soap and water. The rest of your prosthesis can usually be cleaned with a damp cloth if needed. **DO NOT USE WATER OR LIQUID ON ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS!!**

WATER

In general, it is best not to get your prosthesis wet. Always check with your prosthetist before using your prosthesis in or around water. For most prostheses, water will not damage the device, but it *can* cause the components to break down faster and corrode. If your prosthesis does get wet, be sure to use a towel to dry it off as much as possible, then leave it off in a well ventilated

area so it can air dry. If your prosthesis is exposed to salt-water, pools, or other “dirty” water – be sure to flush it completely with fresh water (in the tub or with a garden hose) as soon as possible before drying it. This will help to prevent corrosion as much as possible.

If you expect to encounter water regularly – you may want to take the footshell and spectra sock off the prosthetic foot to clean it thoroughly. The shell can be removed with a shoehorn, but this is a tricky process. We will gladly walk you through the steps if this is something you want to do yourself.

DIRT/SAND

Dirt and sand can be difficult to clean – especially from the footshell. Turning the prosthesis upside down and knocking the debris out of the footshell is easy to do at home. If you still notice a grinding or squeaking sound, it will be best to remove the footshell and spectra sock for a full cleaning. Just schedule an appointment and we can clean it for you, or walk you through the process so you can do it on your own.

DIET & EXERCISE

Your body and limb are dynamic systems. Many things can affect how well your prosthesis fits – most of all your diet and activity level. As you gain or lose weight, your limb shape may change, which causes the prosthesis to be too tight, or too loose. Some minor volume changes are natural from day to day, and even morning to night. Usually, these changes can be addressed with small pads or socks. However, these changes can also cause discomfort while wearing your prosthesis. Things to consider monitoring in your diet include sodium intake, alcohol, fatty foods, etc. These items can cause your body to swell and shrink, or may simply result in weight changes. Significantly increasing or decreasing your activity level can cause you to change weight as well. If you notice any discomfort that does not subside after a few days, please let us know. We may need to adjust your socket to keep you comfortable and on your feet!

FOLLOW-UP

Your prosthesis will last longer and function better if you maintain it properly. Regular follow-ups every 6 months will help us to do this for you. Many times we will notice parts that are breaking down or malfunctioning before you can put your finger on just what you were noticing. We also may adjust the fit or alignment as you continue to improve. Be sure to call and schedule your follow-up appointments every 6 months if everything is going well, or sooner if you are having any issues.