

Prosthetic Limb Wearer

Care of your prosthetic limb

The Socket

This is the part of the artificial limb that fits onto your residual limb. The socket may or may not have a liner. The following notes are important to maintain a good fit and prevent problems with your skin and the underlying tissues.

- **Do** take time each day to clean and check the socket and liner. Poor hygiene within the socket and liner is one of the major causes of skin problems and infections. Your prosthetist will advise you on the best way to clean the liner and socket.
- **Do** be careful when adding or removing socks to improve the socket fit. If you are adjusting the fit with three or more thick socks you probably need to contact the clinic for a review appointment.
- **Do not** adjust the socket yourself. This can lead to serious problems with your residual limb and safety issues with your prosthetic limb. Please contact the Centre if you think your limb may need an adjustment.
- **Do not** immerse the socket or liner in water.

Residual limb changing size and shape

Often there will be significant swelling in your residual limb during the first weeks and months after your operation, but this will reduce with time. As the swelling reduces, your socket will begin to feel loose and may need adjusting. Your prosthetist or physiotherapist will show you how to improve the fit temporarily by adding socks.

Stump socks

Normally you will wear one or more stump socks or a gel liner between your skin and the socket. Socks are primarily used to provide protection and cushioning, and to absorb sweat. They also help us manage the fit of the prosthesis as your leg can change size throughout the day or over time.

Socks come in different lengths (often identified by a coloured band around the top edge) and different thicknesses.

- **terry towelling** socks have a fairly thick pile inside.
- **cotton** socks are half the thickness of the terry towelling socks.

- **nylon** socks are thin, and some people with amputations find them more comfortable to wear next to their skin. More often they will be fitted over the soft foam liner to make it easier to slide in and out of the plastic socket.

Caring for stump socks

Wash your socks as follows:

Machine wash at max 40°C with **mild** detergent. Pull the sock into shape. Air dry naturally.

Other methods may cause skin irritation, alter the socks' shape or age them prematurely.

Knee Joints & Feet

If you have had an above knee (transfemoral) amputation, your limb will usually have a socket, some kind of prosthetic knee joint and a prosthetic foot.

People with below knee (transtibial) amputations will usually have only a socket and a prosthetic foot.

It's important that you know how your prosthesis works and how best to look after it.

- **Do** buy shoes with a heel height as near as possible to the one your artificial limb was made for. A change in heel height can cause socket problems and make walking difficult. Please speak to your prosthetist if you have any questions.
- **Do not** oil, grease, lubricate or use any other chemicals on the knee or foot. If they are noisy, damaged or broken, contact the clinic to make a repair appointment.
- **Do not** adjust your knee or foot unless your prosthetist has shown you how to do this.
- **Do not** drop heavily onto your prosthetic knee. Instead, lower yourself gradually into the kneeling position so you can avoid high impact on the prosthetic knee. Ideally, use a kneeling pad or a cushion.
- **Do not** immerse prosthetic knee joints or prosthetic feet in water. Avoid getting the artificial limb wet.

The Prosthetist

If a prosthesis (artificial limb) is going to be fitted, the prosthetist will make a further appointment with you.

Cast appointment

They will then take some measurements, and may take a scan or plaster mould of your residual limb from which to make your first prosthetic socket. (The socket is the top part of the prosthesis that fits onto your residual limb.)

Quite often there can be frustrating delays at this stage while we wait for excessive swelling to reduce, or for unhealed areas on your residual limb to improve. A specific component for your socket may be needed before we can proceed.

Fitting appointment

Once a mould of your residual limb has been made, you will be given a further appointment for a fitting. It's a good idea to wear loose clothing for your fitting appointments, or bring a pair of shorts to change into. Please remember to bring a pair of comfortable shoes with you, too.

We usually need to make a number of adjustments at the fitting stage, so your prosthesis will not have a cover. If you decide that you would like a cover, this will be fitted at a later stage.

Once the prosthetist is happy with your prosthesis, it will be taken back into the workshop to be made safe. You may be able to take it along with you to your next physiotherapy appointment.

Please make sure you only use your prosthesis as instructed by your clinical team.

If you have any questions please contact us at;

Disablement Services Centre, Rehabilitation Department
Lower Ground Floor, Cumberland Infirmary
Carlisle, CA2 7HY
Tel: 01228 616868 Mon – Friday: 08:30 – 16:30

Transport - Transport is available, if you meet the eligibility criteria Otherwise you will need to make your own way to the DSC. Please phone 0800 032 3240 to book your own transport.

Confidentiality

'The Trust's vision is to keep your information safe in our hands.'

We promise to use your information fairly and legally, and in-line with local and national policies. You have a right to understand how your information is used and you can request a copy of the information we hold about you at any time.

For further information contact the [Subject Access Coordinators](#)
SACCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk or SACWCH@ncuh.nhs.uk

Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback, which helps us to improve our services. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints to make about your care, please contact the PALS team (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) on 01228 814008 between 10.30 and 4.30 Monday to Friday or email PALSCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk.

If you would like this factsheet in another language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio the PALS team will be able to assist you (contact details above)

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