

Caring for Your Artificial Upper Limb



Introduction

Artificial limbs are mechanical devices made up of different parts that work together to help you move. Like any piece of equipment, your artificial limb needs regular care and maintenance to keep it working well.

Keep the socket and liner of your artificial limb clean and free from dirt, dust and fluff. This will help your artificial limb work properly.

Check your artificial limb regularly for signs of wear and tear. If you notice any damage, unusual noises, or changes in how your artificial limb works, contact your prosthetist for maintenance or repairs. **Do not try to adjust screws, bolts, hinges or other parts of your artificial limb yourself.**

Your prosthetist should check your artificial limb **every 12 months**. **You may need it checked sooner** if your prosthetist or rehab team recommends it, or if you notice problems with how your artificial limb fits or works.

Normal use

Your artificial limb is designed to help with everyday activities.

Keep your artificial limb away from extreme heat (above 70°C) and chemicals. If you have a myoelectric artificial limb, avoid sand and water.

Ask your prosthetist or rehab team member for any manufacturer's instructions for your artificial limb.

If you have any questions about your artificial limb, contact your prosthetist or rehab team.

Care and maintenance

Do not hang the artificial limb by the cable or harness. Store cables flat, not coiled or curved. Remove batteries when not in use.

Your socket

Clean the inside of your socket every day to stop bacteria from building up. You may need to clean it more often in hot weather.

Clean the socket with a sponge or soft cloth and mild soap. Use a soft brush, such as an old toothbrush, to clean hard to reach areas. If you have a myoelectric socket, clean it with a damp soft cloth and then wipe it dry. Leave it overnight to dry completely.

When needed, clean the outside in the same way.

Do not put anything inside the socket, such as talcum powder or packing material.

Limb socks

If you wear limb socks, **change them every day**. Wash them gently with mild soap (not detergent) and water. Rinse them well.

Ensure the sock fits snugly, without wrinkles.

Silicone liners

Check your liner and its attachment points regularly for signs of wear and tear. Contact your prosthetist or rehab team member if the attachment points look worn.

Straps and harness

Keep leather parts clean and dry, using leather cleaner.

Ask your prosthetist or rehab team member to show you how to disconnect it for washing and reconnect it correctly. **Wash the harness every week** by

hand or in a washing machine with mild soap and water.

A t-shirt or singlet should be worn under the harness to protect the skin from chafing.

Split hooks

Put a small drop of very light machine oil on the hook hinge from time to time. Tell your prosthetist or rehab team member if you notice any signs of wear.

Carry spare rubber bands in case one breaks. Replace worn or damaged rubber bands using a band applicator.

Keep sand and other abrasive materials away from moving parts.

Cosmetic gloves

Wash the outer glove with mild soap and water. These gloves stain easily, so avoid contact with ballpoint pens, dark fabrics, newspaper print, lipstick and similar materials. Follow the manufacturer's cleaning instructions, as these are different for silicone and PVC gloves. **Check the glove regularly** for tears, as these can let water into the hand or hook.

Cable

Contact your prosthetist or rehab team member if the cable is worn, bent or frayed.

Myoelectric arms

Clean the electrodes by wiping the inside of the socket each day with a damp cloth. Clean them more often on hot days if needed. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for caring for the battery.

Checking the fit

Check your skin before and after wearing your artificial limb. Red or pink marks on your skin should fade **within 10 to 15 minutes**.

If the marks do not fade, or if you get new marks over bony areas, check the fit of your artificial limb. Contact your prosthetist or rehab team if the problem continues.

Signs that your artificial limb may not fit properly include difficulty controlling the elbow, hand or hook, or difficulty using the muscle sensors (myosites) on a myoelectric artificial limb.



For more helpful resources, please visit our website: www.pw.co.nz/resources.



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