

BOOKLET

Caring for Your Lower Limb Prosthesis



Introduction

Prosthetic limbs are mechanical devices made up of various components and require regular maintenance.

It is your responsibility as a prosthetic user to keep the prosthetic socket and liner free from dirt, fluff or dust, as well as ensuring your limb socks are clean.

Regularly check your prosthesis for signs of wear and tear. If you notice the following, do not put your prosthesis on. Contact your prosthetist for maintenance or repair if:

- liner is loose (has unwound from locking pin)
- crack in the socket
- new and unexpected noises coming from prosthesis
- new excessive movement in your prosthesis

Do not adjust screws, bolts, hinges or other parts of the prosthesis yourself.

The **prosthesis should be reviewed every 12 months or earlier** if recommended by your clinician or there are problems with the fit or function.

Normal use

The prosthesis is designed for use in normal conditions and environments. It has not been designed for use in:

- wet/dusty environments - the prosthesis is not water-proof (unless you have been provided a waterproof limb), so do not submerge your prosthesis
- activities that will include unusually high impact
- chemical environments that may alter the structural integrity of the prosthesis
- extreme heat/sunlight – this may also affect the properties of the materials

The components in the prosthesis are weight-rated; you must advise your prosthetist if you intend to carry large loads while using your prosthesis.

Your socket

Daily cleaning of the inside of your socket is required to prevent bacteria build-up.

Clean with a sponge or soft cloth and mild soap. Inaccessible points can be reached with a soft brush (e.g. an old toothbrush). Leave to dry thoroughly overnight. Clean the outside similarly when necessary.

Check socket

Check sockets are often used as a fitting tool to assess socket fit before we manufacture your definitive socket. Clear check sockets are not as durable as definitive sockets and can crack or break.

Do not use your prosthesis if you notice the plastic is cracked or is making cracking noises. Contact your prosthetist for a review. All check sockets are reinforced for use outside of the centre.

Valves in a suction socket

Clean the base of the valve and the socket opening with a soft brush to remove any built up powder or other substances which may prevent proper function of the valve.

The valve must always be secured properly in its outer housing and if it has a button, this should work smoothly. If the valve does not work well see your prosthetist.

Checking the fit

Check your skin before and after using your prosthesis. **Areas of pressure** (red or pink marks) **should disappear after 10 to 15 minutes**. Do not put your prosthesis on again until any red marks have gone.

If they do not subside within a reasonable time or if new marks develop over bony areas, check the fit of your prosthesis and alter the number of socks accordingly.

If problems persist, stop using your prosthesis immediately and contact your prosthetist for a review within 48 hours.

Changes in your body weight will alter the fit of your prosthesis. If you lose or gain significant weight, report this immediately to your prosthetist, clinic or medical practitioner.

Do not add any foreign material into the socket (e.g. talc, packing material).

Limb socks

Limb socks are worn to protect your skin, provide comfort and absorb your sweat.

If you wear socks, change daily or more frequently if needed. You may need to add or remove them throughout the day to adjust how your prosthesis fits.

As long as your prosthesis remains comfortable and does not cause rubbing, you can add socks as required.

Socks should be hand-washed with mild soap (not detergent) and water. Rinse well. **Ensure the sock fits snugly, without wrinkles.**

Silicone socks/ liners

Avoid contact with ball point pens, newsprint, vegetable dyes, etc, which will leave a permanent stain. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning (this differs between manufacturers).

Check with our team how to put your liner on correctly.

If you are wearing a liner or sleeve, it is important to keep this firm to reduce "pistoning" (the tendency for the prosthesis to slide up and down your stump) which can lead to skin abrasion.

Use mild soap and a damp cloth to wipe the sleeve or liner to keep clean. Wash off all soap and dry overnight.

If you wear a liner with a pin locking system check and ensure the pin is secured in position, contact your prosthetic team if you find this to be loose.

Some types of socket or liners may cause excessive sweating, particularly in summer. For most people, **sweating will reduce after 3 months of use.** The use of antiperspirant can reduce this issue.

Regularly inspect your liner and any attachment points for signs of wear and tear. See your prosthetist if the attachment looks worn.

Straps and Harness

Keep straps clean and dry. Use saddle soap to clean any leather parts. Wash straps with soap and warm water.

Regularly inspect straps and harness for signs of wear and tear (e.g. stitching coming undone). See your prosthetist if the straps or harness look worn.

Storage

Where your prosthesis is fitted with a hydraulic knee joint, store in an upright position only.

Footwear

A lower limb prosthesis should be worn with footwear, unless directed by your prosthetist.

During the prescription stage of prosthetic provision the prosthetist will discuss with you the type of footwear you would normally wear.

How long will my prosthesis last?

Depending on your age, activity level and growth, **your prosthesis can last anywhere from several months to several years**. In the early stages after amputation, changes in your stump can lead to loss of fit and discomfort.

This may lead to a need for socket adjustments from your prosthetist, the addition of liners, or even a different device. Later on, increased activity levels and the desire for additional function can mean a change in your prosthesis or some of its component parts.

It is anticipated that after the initial more intensive fitting and training phase your prosthesis should only require minor repairs or maintenance and can last for an average of three years.

Do not attempt to repair your prosthesis yourself. If you have any questions about your prosthesis (e.g. the way it is fitting or whether it is working properly) please contact your prosthetist.

Wear and tear signs

Wear and tear can cause discomfort around the stump but could also cause severe damage to mechanical components. Look out for these wear and tear signs on your prosthesis:



Example of delamination at the distal end.



Example of foot heel rubber failure.

Example of prosthesis used for a purpose of which it was not intended, e.g. using foot as hammer.



If you **notice anything unusual** on your prosthesis and have questions, contact your prosthetist or rehab team leader for a review.

Notes

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



Peke Waihangā

Artificial Limb Service

Contacts

Auckland Centre

7 Horopito Street,
Mount Eden, Auckland 1024

☎ 0508 630 630

✉ auckland@nzals.co.nz

Hamilton Centre

222 Pembroke Street,
Hamilton 3204

☎ 0508 838 838

✉ hamilton@nzals.co.nz

Tauranga Centre

160 Fraser Street,
Tauranga 3112

☎ 0508 434 434

✉ tauranga@nzals.co.nz

National Office

☎ (04) 385 9410

✉ info@nzals.co.nz

Wellington Centre

42-46 Mein Street, Newtown,
Wellington 6021

☎ 0508 389 389

✉ wellington@nzals.co.nz

Christchurch Centre

330 Burwood Road,
Christchurch 8083

☎ 0508 383 383

✉ christchurch@nzals.co.nz

Dunedin Centre

464 Cumberland Street,
Dunedin 9016

☎ 0508 474 474

✉ dunedin@nzals.co.nz

Learn more about Peke Waihangā

💻 www.pw.co.nz

💻 www.peersupport.nz

💻 www.orthoticservice.co.nz

Find Peke Waihangā online

Follow Peke Waihangā on social media for the latest news, stories and events:

📘 Peke Waihangā

🌐 Peke Waihangā

📷 @pekewaihangā

📺 Peke Waihangā