Caring for your prosthetic lower limb

The prosthetic limb is a mechanical device made up of various components and, therefore, requires 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 the prosthesis for signs of wear and tear. If there are any unusual signs (visible, audible or functional), contact your prosthetist for maintenance or repair. DO NOT adjust screws, bolts, hinges or other parts of the prosthesis yourself.

The prosthesis should be reviewed every six months or earlier if 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, so do not intentionally get your prosthesis wet
- 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.

The socket

Daily cleaning of the interior of the socket is required to prevent microbial bacteria build-up.

Clean with a sponge or soft cloth and a little mild soap. Inaccessible points can be reached with a soft brush (e.g. an old toothbrush).

Leave to dry thoroughly overnight. Clean the exterior in a similar way when necessary.

Valves in a suction socket

Clean the base of the valve and the socket opening with a soft brush to remove any accumulated powder or other substance 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 the skin prior to and following use of the prosthesis. Areas of pressure (red or pink marks) should disappear after 10 to 15 minutes.
If they do not dissipate within a reasonable time or if new marks develop over bony areas, check the fit of the prosthesis and alter the number of socks accordingly.

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

Changes in your body weight will alter the fit of the 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 the skin, provide comfort and absorb perspiration.

Socks should be changed daily and 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). Regularly inspect the 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.

**Storage**

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

**Footwear**

A lower limb prosthesis must not be used without footwear. The height of shoes must be identical – have your shoes repaired when worn.

Ask your prosthetist for any manufacturer’s instructions related to your prosthesis.

**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.**

For more information:

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