

## The NSW Artificial Limb Service

The New South Wales Artificial Limb Service (NSW ALS) is one of the disability support programs administered by EnableNSW. It is responsible for the provision of artificial limbs to eligible people residing in New South Wales.

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## Caring for your residual and intact limb

### How to prevent infections

It is important that you do not touch the wound while your residual limb (stump) is healing as this may increase the chance of infection.

The nurses will monitor and dress the wound regularly using sterile techniques. You should not interfere with these dressings.

Maintaining the hygiene of your residual limb is important as perspiration and the dirt and grime of daily activities can lead to wounds and an infection.

It is important to wash your residual limb daily with soap and water, rinse it and dry it carefully.

However, do not soak your residual limb for long periods of time as this makes the skin soft and increases the chance of the skin breaking down.

The best time to clean your residual limb is at night as the residual limb must be thoroughly dry before applying the prosthesis.

It should not be washed in the morning unless a residual limb sock is worn.

If you find that you are perspiring a lot during the day then remove the prosthesis and pat the residual limb dry.

**Don't:** Touch your wound while your residual limb is healing.

**Don't:** Soak your residual limb.

**Don't:** Wash your residual limb in the morning.

**Do:** Maintain hygiene by washing your residual limb nightly with soap and water, rinse it and dry it carefully.

### How to care for your residual limb

It is important that you care for your residual limb to prevent problems such as sensitivity, wound breakdown or infection following your surgery.

To decrease any sensitivity in your residual limb, it is important that you begin to touch the intact skin.

Staff will teach you to touch and massage your residual limb once it is healed enough.

If your residual limb is extremely sensitive and painful to touch, your therapist should be able to give you exercises to reduce the sensitivity.

This may involve touching or rubbing cream into your residual limb, or rubbing different fabrics on your skin, such as a towel when you are drying your skin after a shower or bath.

**Do:** Touch and massage your residual limb.

**Do:** Ask your therapist to teach you exercises that decrease sensitivity.

### How to prevent scar or wound breakdown

Your scar or wound can breakdown due to an increase in pressure on part of the residual limb.

If your scar becomes stuck to the bone underneath, this will increase the chance of rubbing over that area, particularly when you wear your prosthesis.

Massaging your scar can prevent your scar from sticking to the bone.

You should not shave your residual limb as this can also cause skin breakdown and a wound.

Always check your skin when you remove your prosthesis for any excessive redness, pressure points, irritation, swelling or skin breakdown.

If you do notice any wounds or pressure areas developing you should contact your prosthetist and/or Amputee Clinic for a review.

It is best not to put this off, so if there is a waiting time, have your residual limb reviewed by your GP or Community Nurse and try to reduce the amount of time you spend wearing your prosthesis.

Changes in body weight can also affect the fit of your prosthesis and increase pressure points on your residual limb. Therefore, if you notice that you have lost or gained a reasonable amount of weight you should also let your clinic or medical practitioner know.

**Do:** Massage over your scar.

**Do:** Check your skin every time you remove your prosthesis.

**Do:** Contact your prosthetist/ amputee clinic if you notice any changes to your residual limb or prosthesis.

**Do:** Inform your clinic or medical practitioner if you lose or gain weight.

### How to care of your intact limb

It is important to care for your intact limb in order to prevent the need for further amputation.

Make sure you check your intact limb every time you remove your footwear for any excessive redness, pressure points, irritation, swelling or skin breakdown.

It is very important to do this if you have poor sensation in your limb due to a medical condition such as diabetes.

It is also important to clean and dry your intact limb and replace your socks and shoes before they get worn out. Your local doctor can refer you to a podiatrist (chiropractist) to make sure your foot is checked regularly.

If you notice any wounds or pressure areas developing you should contact your GP straight away. It may be possible to get custom made footwear for the intact limb to aid in the use of the prosthesis. Your rehabilitation specialist can help you with this request.

**Do:** Check your intact limb every time you remove footwear.

**Do:** Clean and dry your intact limb.

**Do:** Ask your local doctor or podiatrist to check your intact limb regularly.