



Skin care and hygiene

The skin on an amputee's residual limb (stump) may be fragile and needs to be carefully looked after. Whether you use prosthesis or a wheelchair, it is vital that you look after and clean your skin daily. Report any changes in your skin to your doctor or prosthetist immediately.

How can I look after my skin?

It is important to check your residual limb daily for any signs of injury, swelling or pressure areas. Any red marks or changes to your skin should be attended to if they do not fade after 15 minutes from the time you remove your prosthesis.

There are a number of things that you should think about:

- Skin hygiene is very important and should be part of your regular personal hygiene routine. You should wash, clean and dry your residual limb (stump) daily when bathing or having a shower.
- Stump socks and prosthetic liners should be washed and changed daily with a gentle fragrance-free anti-bacterial soap, and rinsed well. You may need to change stump socks or liners more often if you sweat heavily during the warmer months or after taking part in physical activity (such as when taking part in sports). Always be sure to dry your socks and liners properly, and never wear a wet or damp liner or sock.
- Stop wearing your prosthesis if you have any pain or discomfort.
- Wear safe and comfortable shoes to reduce foot issues and ensure safety.

Why does my residual limb (stump) change over time?

During the first year following amputation, you may notice a number of changes. Your stump may continue to reduce in size and change in shape as your body adjusts to wearing a prosthesis. You may find that you need to visit your prosthetist more frequently during this time. During the second and third year, your body and stump will start to stabilise and the need for adjustments to your prosthesis will generally become less frequent.

What is the best way to care for my residual limb?

It is important to get into a regular routine and check your limb on a daily basis, or immediately if you experience any pain or changes in your stump. Any pain or changes may indicate that your prosthesis isn't fitting you correctly.



Important tips!

- Use a hand mirror to check the back of your stump for changes before you put your prosthesis on.
- Check your stump for markings or changes when you take your prosthesis off.
- Regardless of whether you are prosthetic user or not, always check for skin breaks, ulcers, dryness or cracking. Using a hand mirror is the best way of doing this. If you are unable to do this yourself ask a loved one to check for you. Any noticeable changes should be immediately seen to by your doctor.

Can I remove growing hair or have hair removal?

Amputees often ask about shaving, waxing or having laser-therapy on their stump. Your healthcare team will discourage you from doing this, as it may lead to infection. If you do decide to wax or shave your stump and the hair follicle becomes infected, you may find yourself in pain, discomfort and unable to wear your prosthesis until the infection clears. Seek advice and a second opinion if you are worried or concerned.

Skincare and prosthetic checklist

You should seek medical attention if your:

- Residual limb is swollen and tender
- Residual limb feels unusually cold or hot
- Prosthesis is not fitting properly – too tight/too loose
- Stump socks have worn thin or have holes
- Liner has split or is no longer firm

Remember: your prosthesis should not cause you pain. If you are experiencing pain make an appointment with your prosthetist immediately.