

Since you rely on your residual limb and prosthetic device to move, it's important to know how to take care of both. A prosthesis is a mechanical device that requires cleaning as well as regular prosthesis maintenance by a prosthetist or technician.

As for your remaining limb, it will need to undergo a “shaping” process whereby your healthcare provider will prescribe a compression stocking to shape it to fit the prosthesis. Follow your doctor's recommendations, as they'll prescribe the best above-knee prosthesis use and care for each amputee's needs.

Below, our team at PrimeCare has put together a general guide on how to care for [prosthetics](#).

## Limb Care

- **New amputees should shower or bathe in the evening rather than the morning**, as hot water causes limbs to swell, which makes it more difficult to fit prostheses. We recommend wearing a shrinker at first to compress your remaining limb until such time you no longer need to.
- For both [below-knee \(transtibial\)](#) and [above-knee](#) amputations, **post-artificial limb care guidelines recommend avoiding the use of pillows under or between the legs during sleep**, as this can lead to difficulties in straightening the knee or hip. This can affect mobility and comfort.
- **Do daily stretching exercises recommended by your doctor.** These straighten the knee and hip to provide increased comfort when lying down and walking. Although it might seem unnecessary, prosthesis daily stretching is crucial for maintaining mobility!

## Skin Care



Care of residual limbs after amputation is vital. Make sure to participate in routine skin care while using prosthetics; it's important to maintain the skin's protective function. Neglecting this can result in painful ulcers and serious infection, which affects rehabilitation, comfort, and mobility.

## Amputee Skin Problems

Skin complications are a common concern for amputees and require vigilant attention. The enclosed environment created by prosthetic devices often leads to a range of skin issues.

- **Skin Irritation:** Due to friction between the skin and the prosthetic device.
- **Pressure Sores:** Caused by the continuous pressure exerted by the prosthetic.
- **Sweating and Odor:** Due to lack of air circulation inside the prosthetic device.
- **Fungal Infections:** Often arise from a moist environment within the prosthetic.
- **Skin Ulcers:** A severe form of skin breakdown that can lead to infection.
- **Redness and Inflammation:** Signs that the fit or alignment of the prosthetic device may need adjustment.

- **Dry Skin:** Increases susceptibility to tears and cracks, becoming a portal for bacteria.

## Amputee Skin Care Tips

- **Wash your limb once a day with mild soap and warm water, and pat it completely dry to avoid fungal growth.** It's important to change dressings daily, or more often if they become saturated.
- **Always examine your skin before and after wearing your prosthetic.** If there are signs of persistent redness, ulceration, tears, or scrapes, let your doctor and prosthetist know immediately. If red patches last more than a few minutes after you remove your prosthesis, this could be a sign your socket needs checking.
- **As we noted, prosthetic skin care is essential.** Because residual limbs are enclosed in plastic sockets, perspiration is likely and normal. However, this can also be a source of odor and bacteria. Sprinkling a small amount of powder can help, as well as changing the prosthetic sock to keep things dry and comfortable. Perspiration generally subsides with persistent prosthetic use.
- **Consult your doctor before using lotions, ointments, or powders.** These may irritate the skin or cause inflammation. Be sure to hydrate your dry skin at night when you're not using your prosthesis. Keeping your skin moisturized is vital as dry skin is more fragile.
- **Check your skin often, especially if you have decreased sensations.** A mirror may be helpful if you can't see your limb, and know that solutions for excessive sweating are available.
- **If you notice redness, callouses, irritation, blisters, and breakdown, or if your prosthesis doesn't feel right, remove it and check your skin.** Be sure to tell your health care providers so they can help you remedy the issue or direct you to the appropriate care. General skin irritation and allergic reactions are often a result of soaps, cleansers, manufacturing chemicals, and lotions.

Remember, care of residual limb after amputation is an ongoing process and early intervention can prevent complications.

# General Prosthetic Care

Dos:

- **Clean Daily:** Keep your prosthesis clean with a damp cloth and mild soap for thermoplastic sockets and liners. For myoelectric prosthetics, wipe and leave them to dry overnight.
- **Wear Fresh Liners and Socks:** To maintain hygiene, wear new liners and/or socks every day to minimize bacterial growth.
- **Inspect Daily:** Give your prosthesis a quick once-over each day to catch any wear and tear or loose components.
- **See Your Prosthetist Regularly:** Regular check-ups help ensure optimal function of your prosthesis and keep you updated with the latest advancements.
- **Store Carefully:** Place prostheses in a secure location where they won't get knocked over, and avoid storing them in direct sunlight, near ovens, or close to radiators to protect against damage from a hot environment.

#### Don'ts:

- **Avoid DIY Modifications:** Don't make adjustments to your prosthesis yourself, especially if it's making strange noises. Consult your prosthetist for any changes.
- **Steer Clear of Water:** Keep the device away from fresh or salt water to prevent rusting and damage to sensitive components. If you can't avoid frequent contact with water, consult your prosthetist about the option of a waterproof prosthesis.
- **Don't Overexert:** Take breaks as needed, especially during the initial phases of rehabilitation, to avoid straining your limb.
- **Avoid Leaving in Visible Spots in Cars:** Don't leave your prosthesis completely visible in your car to minimize the risk of theft and damage from heat.

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## Detailed Prosthetic Maintenance

Understanding how to care for a prosthesis is key to maintaining its longevity and ensuring optimal performance. Below are specialized care guidelines tailored to different types of prosthetic devices.

## Socket and Prosthetic Liner Care

- Daily cleansing of the socket is important, especially when dealing with a prosthetic leg. Use warm water and soap. If needed, use a scrub brush for hard-to-reach spots.
- For prosthetic liner care, rinse off soap residue with a clean, damp cloth, and dry the liner thoroughly. Allow it to air out overnight for optimal hygiene.
- To combat bacteria and reduce odors, spray the inner socket and prosthetic exterior with rubbing alcohol and let it air dry.

## Caring for Passive Devices

- Robust passive devices can be initially cleaned using compressed air to eliminate debris. If approved, follow up with water and soap.
- More delicate passive devices should be sanitized only with rubbing alcohol and stored in their designated boxes.

## Body-Powered Devices

- Use compressed air to remove initial debris. You can add soap for a deeper cleaning, ensuring that all soap residue is rinsed off.
- Focus on thorough drying to remove all moisture, especially if your device has components susceptible to rust.

## Myoelectric Device Care

- Myoelectric prostheses should never be submerged in liquid. Even sweat can damage the wiring, which makes bi-annual maintenance essential.
- Exercise caution around charging ports and batteries to avert moisture-related damage.

## Cosmetic and Functional Add-Ons

- Inspect soft liners and rubber padding daily for wear and tear, and replace them as necessary.

- Cosmetic gloves are prone to staining. Be sure to clean them as needed and report any cracks or cuts to your prosthetist.

## Conclusion

Prosthetic rehabilitation is a journey, so be patient with yourself! New amputees should take time to get used to wearing a prosthesis as they adjust to new maintenance regimes and increased mobility. If you're unsure how to take prosthetic care or have any questions, always ask your doctor. They are qualified and attuned to your unique needs and will recommend the best course of action.

If you're an amputee requiring a new prosthetic or about to undergo an amputation, we can help make your journey toward independence a success. For over a decade, [PrimeCare](#) has provided residents in Las Cruces and surrounding areas with cutting-edge prosthetics that improve their lives. [Contact us](#) for a no-obligation, initial consultation today!