

Tips for Taking Care of Your Limb

Proper Limb and Skin Care is Essential to your Health and Mobility

Limb Care

If you are a new amputee, it is better to take showers at night rather than in the morning, as your limb will swell in hot water or when dangling as you sit or stand to shower making it difficult to put on your prosthesis. In the beginning, you should use a shrinker at night, and put on your prosthesis when you get up from the bed- in other words, don't let your leg hang down or it will swell. As time goes by this will be less necessary.

If you have a transtibial (below knee) amputation, never sit or sleep with a pillow under your knee, as this can lead to a contracture (inability to straighten the knee).

If you have a transfemoral (above knee) amputation, do not sleep with your limb resting on a pillow, as this will promote hip flexion contracture (inability to straighten your hip).

Do not rest your limb over the handle piece of your crutches.

Do stretching exercises daily to make sure that you straighten your knee and hip, this makes walking and even lying in bed more comfortable.

Skin Care

Wash your limb with mild soap and water every day and pat dry with a soft towel. Be patient and allow it to dry completely. If this is not don't, your will be at risk

for fungal growth that could lead to infection or abrasion.

Check your limb for red pressure patches that last more than a few minutes after your remove your prosthesis; these may be a sign that the socket needs checking. If left untended there red patches may results in skin breakdown.

Check for skin breakdown twice a day, if you cannot see the end of your residual limb use a mirror, this is particularly important for people with diabetes.

Softening cream should only be used if the skin is extremely dry and at risk of cracking. It should only be used temporarily unless cleared by your doctor.

Do not use talcum powder on your limb, as it can ball up and create an abrasion. If you must use a powder, cornstarch is better.

Do not use alcohol or unknown chemicals/creams on your limb.

Remember your limb is covered all the time so be very careful if you expose it to the sun. Use sunscreen SPF 30 or better.

Do not shave your limb this can cause in grown hairs which can become infected.

If you are having a fit problem with your socket, causing skin breakdown, go to your prosthetist for an adjustment. If the breakdown is infected your will need to see your doctor as well. Stop using your prosthesis; always have crutches and a wheelchair for back up.

If you have skin breakdown, don't use your prosthesis. Put a clean

additional pressure and will make it worse.

A red spot that turns into an ulcer can mean weeks without being able to use your prosthesis. Stop using it immediately and call your prosthesis/doctor.

If you have reduced or no sensation in your residual limb, check your limb more frequently during the day and don't put it in hot water or expose it to the sun. It can burn or blister.

Prosthetic Care

Wash anything that makes skin contact (liners, socks, inside of socket, etc.) everyday with mild soap and water and allow plenty of time to dry. Follow manufacturer's instructions for care of liners. Unless specifically instructed, do not use any alcohol or unknown chemicals.

You should know the landmarks of when your socket fits correctly. If you don't, ask your prosthetist to show you. If your socket is too big or too small, visit your prosthesis immediately.

Make sure your shoe height is correct for your prosthesis or your alignment will be wrong, putting a strain on your residual limb and surrounding joints.

Remember the fit of your prosthesis changes during the day so add socks when needed.

If you are having trouble with the prosthesis or liner, do not make your own adjustments or alter the prosthesis. Call your prosthetist immediately.

Ask the Prosthetist:

Q: Why does my leg have to be so heavy?

A: Prostheses range from very light to heavy duty. The components that are used in your prostheses are designed for specific patient weights and activity levels. All lower-limb prostheses are subjected to very high degrees of stress. The forces generated by activity levels. All lower limb prostheses are subjected to very high degrees of stress. The forces generated by simply walking on a level surface are significantly higher than your body weight. Walking up and down ramps and stairs creates even greater stresses on the prostheses, so it is very important that you and your prosthesis discuss your environment and activity level. Modern advancements have led to stronger yet lighter-weight components, made from the materials such as carbon fiber and titanium. The goals for the design of your prosthesis are to provide you with the lightest weight device possible, which will safely allow you to perform to your highest potential activity level. A loose fitting socket or lack of adequate suspension can also lead to a feeling that the prosthesis is too heavy. If you find that your prosthesis feels heavy, see your prosthetist.

Q: How can I control perspiration in my prosthesis?

A: Different people have different levels of perspiration. New amputees often experience a period of high levels of residual limb perspiration when first wearing their prosthesis. This heavy perspiration period generally subsides as your limb adjusts to its environment inside the socket. If unusually

heavy perspiration continues, your physician may prescribe specially formulated antiperspirants, such as Drysol.

Q: How long is my prosthesis supposed to last?

A: The useful lifespan of your prosthesis depends on several factors. Changes in the residual limb volume (size) often necessitate modifying or replacing the socket to maintain a proper and comfortable fit. Changes in activity level, body weight, component fatigue and general wear and tear are all factors that determine the lifespan of the rest of the prosthesis. It is critical that your prosthesis fit properly and be in sound physical condition to withstand the forces placed on it daily. We recommend that prostheses be evaluated and safety checked at least every 6 months by a prosthetist. Often major problems can be prevented by early detection.

Q: Why can't it look like my other leg?

A: Advancements in prosthetic cover material and skins allow most prostheses to have a very pleasing cosmetic appearance. When desired by the patient, a cosmetic cover and skin can be made to be removable by the wearer. Some prosthetic users have times when they prefer to not use a cover and other times when they do. The cover and skin not only provides a pleasing cosmesis, but it also protects the prosthetic components from moisture and physical damage. A satisfactory cosmetic effect can be challenging in cases

where the residual limb is actually larger than that residual limb. This is more often the case when dealing with a recent amputation. As the swelling in the residual limb subsides over time, closer cosmetic results will follow. It is important to share your preferences for cosmetic appearance with your prosthetist.

Q: How will I ever be able to pay for my prosthetic care?

A: Most private insurance, as well as Medicare and Medicaid cover prosthetic care. The Amputee Coalition and other groups have worked very hard to introduce and pass parity legislation in many states to ensure that insurance companies do not place unrealistic limits on prosthetics care. Federal Legislation is also pending. If you are not insured, talk with your prosthetist. Other sources of funding are out there, and he or she will help you find and secure it. Do not give up! There is always a solution!

Q: Is there something new out there that would make a difference in my life?

A: It is difficult for people with limb loss to keep up with the advancements in prosthetics. Over the last 5 years, huge strides have been made in options that are available. New Technology, including micro-processor knees and feet, advanced hands, sockets, and the Aqua Leg have made significant improvements in the lifestyle of countless amputees. Your prosthetist can keep you informed about all the advancements that can benefit you.



The Process of Creating Your Prosthesis & What You Can Expect

Prosthetic Liaison

Appointment:

At Body in Motion Sports & Orthopedics we provide every amputee with an initial consultation/pre-screening with our Prosthetic Liaison. The purpose of this appointment is to coordinate your care plan with your physical therapist, social worker, case manager, physician, and/or family members. As well as to answer any initial questions you may have as you start your journey. This enables everyone involved in your care to be 'on the same page' regarding outcomes. During this appointment which will last about 1 hour, you will be given written information regarding your Prosthetist, as well as what you can expect from us. This also streamlines time and effort when obtaining authorizations from your insurance company. When this appointment is complete you will then have an appointment set up for an evaluation with your Prosthetist at a mutually agreed upon date and time.

Evaluation for Definitive Prosthesis:

This is the beginning process of designing and fabricating your new prosthesis. At this appointment, your Prosthetist will be asking questions about your previous activities, work, and recreation. The information is used to ensure that the resulting prosthesis comple-

ments your lifestyle and best suits your functionality. Speak up about issues or concerns you have had in the past. Remember you are the one who has to wear this device every day so you should be vocal about comfort and function. Different issues will be discussed at this appointment and agreed upon including socket design, materials, componentry, and how long the entire process should take. Your Prosthetist will use the materials best suited depending on the information you give him. The choice of the materials will not only affect the performance of your prosthesis but also the cosmetic appeal. With the right information your Prosthetist will be able to design the most functional and comfortable prosthesis for you. Like a snowflake, each person is unique. What may be right for you may not be right for someone else

Casting and Measurement:

This is the stage where the design of the socket begins, with a mold of the residual limb being made by hand. We will keep all of your measurements on file in your chart for later reference which can help to justify future fittings and adjustments. Once the cast is taken, it is filled with plaster, and then modified to enhance comfort and weight bearing areas.

Definitive Fitting/Alignment:

At this stage of the process, the prosthesis will be tested for comfort and function. The prosthetist will make the necessary adjustments in the office before letting you try it on for a one or two week test run. This stage is not rushed. We want your prosthesis to be as comfortable as possible. It is easier to adjust the prosthesis before a cosmetic cover is applied.

Cosmetic Finish:

The final stage can be very exciting for amputees, especially for those who are more cosmetically conscious. Most amputees want their prosthesis to look and work as naturally as possible. If we look good we feel good. Some amputees choose to have artificial skin applied that can give the prosthesis a very natural appearance. Prefabricated skin coverings offer a wide array of skin tones we can also laminate your socket and put different designs on the socket as well.

We firmly believe in the strength of human spirit;

Impossible is just a small word thrown around by people who accept the path they are given, rather than explore the power they have to change it.

Impossible is NOTHING; let's explore all the possibilities.



Amputee Support Groups in New Jersey

Cape May Courthouse

The Unlimited Potential Amputee Support Group

Primary Contact:
Paulanne Pierson
(609)886-2784

Dayton

Limb Differences
Primary Contact:
Cynthia Betancourt
(732)438-9202

Edison

INPUT (Inspired NJ Prosthetic Users Together)

Primary Contact:
Peter Dacchille
(732)602-0188

Hackensack

Kessler Rehabilitation Amputee Support Group

Primary Contact:
Cynthia Macaluso
(201)368-6018

Marlton

Amps In Action
Primary Contact:
Andrea Varone
(856)988-8778 (ask for PT Gym)

Saddle Brook

Kessler Amputee Support Group

Primary Contact:
Cynthia Macaluso
(201)368-6087

Tinton Falls

Amputees on the Move at Tinton Falls

Primary Contact:
Sharon Collins
(732)460-5378

Toms River

Amputees Unlimited!

Primary Contact:
Lori Stout
(732)505-5022

Meet your Prosthetist

Greg Krause is a NJ Licensed Prosthetist; he has been a practicing Prosthetist since 1975. He has been an amputee for 48 years. He is fully certified in all micro-processor limbs, including the C-Leg, Rheo Knee, Plie' Knee, and the all new i-Limb hand replacement. Additionally, he is certified in the technically advanced MAS socket design. As an active amputee himself, Greg is uniquely qualified to deal with the prosthetic patient. His active lifestyle and positive attitude has enabled him to be an exemplary Peer Counselor for the ACA (Amputee Coalition of America). He is one of the founding fathers of Sail-Habilitation, an organization which in-

structs people with disabilities and amputees in all aspects of sailing. He is also a member of Eastern Paralyzed Veterans of America. "I believe in helping give back the gift of life".

Rick Cuccinello is a NJ Licensed Prosthetist/Orthotist; he has been practicing since 1996 and clinically working in the O&P Industry since 1979, managing an O&P Lab for over 10 years. He is fully certified in all micro-processor limbs, including the C-Leg, Rheo Knee, the MASS Socket design, and the new Unity System from Ossur. Rick is also certified in all stance control knee joints and utilizes

his experience in both disciplines to further advance his patients. He enjoys cooking and traveling.