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# Receiving your prosthesis

## Preparing the site

The staples or stitches will be removed about 3–4 weeks after surgery. Typically, a shrinker will then be applied. However, this process can be delayed if wounds are present. The skin must be healed enough for the tight shrinker to be pulled over it. (For information about the shrinker, see pages 16–18.)

If no scabbing is present and the suture line is fully healed, you can begin to massage the limb. Massaging will help break up the scar tissue that can form underneath the skin during the healing process. This is important because scar tissue decreases the skin's elastic nature and can become a possible site for breakdown once you begin walking.

## Check socket fitting

When your limb is healed and the shape is ready for a prosthesis, you will walk on a check socket or diagnostic prosthesis. This is typically 2–4 weeks after the shrinker has been worn, depending on how quickly your leg takes shape and heals.

This prosthesis is worn only in the clinic. It is made of a clear, easily adjustable material that is not strong enough for you to take home. Your prosthetist will make adjustments as you stand, walk and sit in the leg to ensure proper fit and alignment. We then will make the preparatory prosthesis based on the adjustments made at this appointment.



### Tip from Lee

**“Being in a socket is a different sensation, but it does allow you to walk comfortably.”**

This is a crucial time to communicate with your prosthetist. We use all of your input and feedback in addition to our observations to make the best possible fit.

## Preparatory prosthesis

A preparatory prosthesis will be made after a successful check socket fitting. It is the first prosthesis you will go home with. This is typically worn for 6–10 months. During this time, your limb will change in size and various adjustments will need to be made to your prosthesis as you become more proficient in walking.

If you wish to customize your socket, talk with your prosthetist about options and bring the desired material to your check socket appointment.

## Definitive prosthesis

A definitive prosthesis will be used once your limb has matured and the size of the leg has stabilized. It will be made of carbon fiber and other lightweight materials for decreased weight and increased strength. This socket also can be customized.

## Congratulations on receiving your new definitive prosthesis!

### Socket design

You have the option to customize the appearance of the socket on your prosthesis. It can be made to look like your skin tone, carbon fiber or any appropriate type of material. The material should be a thin material that absorbs water easily (T-shirts and bandanas work well). Here are example of the socket styles.

**Skin socket design**



**Carbon socket design**



**Custom socket design**





## Tip from Lee

“Here are some tips for working with your prosthetist:

- **Follow instructions:** this includes *not overdoing*.
- **Tell him or her what you feel:** where the prosthesis hurts/pinches/just doesn't feel right.
- **Give specific feedback:** your goals, what you are trying to accomplish, and especially what did and didn't work.

The prosthetist then takes that information and can make innumerable adjustments to make your life in the prosthesis safer, easier and more fulfilling.”

## Wear schedule

It is important to gradually increase your wear time to “break in” the prosthesis. Because this is a new prosthesis, your residual limb will need to adjust to the new pressures that are being applied to it.

By gradually increasing your wearing time, your limb will more easily adjust to the prosthesis and any issues can be caught before problems arise. This process is

especially important if you have diabetes or if your skin is sensitive.

### Breaking in your prosthesis: Sample wear schedule

Week 1	1 hr. morning, 1 hr. afternoon
Week 2	2 hrs. morning, 2 hrs. afternoon
Week 3	3 hrs. morning, 3 hrs. afternoon
Week 4	4 hrs. morning, 4 hrs. afternoon
Week 5	Full time

Begin wearing your prosthesis for only one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon. Again, check your skin after taking off your prosthesis. If there are no problems, the wearing time can be increased weekly according to the wear schedule.

The wear schedule here is a guideline. Many factors affect your particular wear schedule. Please discuss the best wearing schedule for you with your prosthetist or therapist.

## Sock management

As a new amputee, understanding sock management is crucial. Your limb will change in size as you become more active and distribute weight through your limb. Knowing what a correct fit feels like and when to adjust your sock ply will ensure your fit is appropriate and prevents skin breakdown.

Socks are worn on the outside of your liner. They come in 1-, 3- or 5-ply sizes with 1-ply being the thinnest and 5-ply being the thickest. The “ply” refers to number of strands of yarn in the sock.

You will receive a supply of sock sizes for your prosthesis. Socks serve many purposes, including to:

- Adjust fit of socket
- Compensate for volume changes
- Protect the skin
- Absorb friction
- Cushion

The number of socks you wear throughout the day can change. Socks also can be used in combination together. Use any combination of 1-, 3-, and 5-ply socks to get the desired fit. It is recommended to keep socks with you, so you can adjust your fit as needed.

Every time you put on the prosthesis, you should know what thickness (ply) you are wearing. If your socket feels too loose, you may want to increase your sock ply. If your socket feels too tight, you may want to reduce your sock ply. It is best to wear the least number of socks to achieve your optimal ply. For example, wearing one 5-ply sock is better than if you combine one 3-ply with two 1-ply socks.

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## Important reminders

- Always follow the recommendations from your prosthetist. You may get a customized wear schedule, depending on the status and condition of your residual limb or other health factors.
- Please make an appointment in our office if you develop a sore, blister, rash or the prosthesis is uncomfortable. If you have any questions, please call our main office at 864-522-3880.

When putting your socks on, make sure there are no wrinkles in your sock. These wrinkles can irritate your skin and be harmful to the health of your leg. If you are using a locking pin for your suspension, it's important to prevent the sock from bunching around the pin.

Wear clean socks every day. On hot and humid days, many people will put on fresh socks half way through the day. Do not wear the same socks for several days before washing. It is not good for your skin or the socks. Follow the washing instructions provided by the manufacturer.

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## Quick reference for sock management

Add socks if:	Remove socks if:
There is pressure on boney area	Leg cannot fully get into socket
Redness lasts more than 30 minutes	Socket is unbearably tight
Prosthesis is twisting	
Prosthesis goes on too easily (hear a lot of fast clicks if using a pin)	

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## Check and check again!

**> After removing your prosthesis each day, examine your residual limb.** Some red marks are expected in locations where your residual limb can tolerate pressure. These red marks are not a concern and should go away within 30 minutes of removing the prosthesis.

**> If there are red marks that do not go away, bruising, blisters or abrasions, do not put the prosthesis back on until you talk to your prosthetist.**

## Correct sock ply

The fit should be snug. Areas such as the inside of your shin, under the back side of your knee and patella tendon may experience slight pressure. This is OK as these areas are pressure tolerant areas, and your socket is designed to push here.

Boney areas should not have excessive pressure, nor should the very bottom of your residual limb. If you are experiencing pressure on a bone or bottom of your limb, that is a cue to add a sock. This is because your leg is smaller than the socket and your leg is falling too far down in your prosthesis. A sock will better fill up the space inside your socket and give you a more comfortable fit.

If you are using a pin system and the leg clicks in rapidly, this is also a sign it is too loose. Your leg should gradually click down into the locking mechanism. Also, if you notice your leg is twisting on you, it is a sign you should add socks.

**Socks come in different sizes, colors and designs, depending on the type of prosthesis.**



## Caring for your prosthesis

- Clean your limb every day and inspect for bruising, callused spots, blisters or areas of breakdown.
- Examine your skin and foot of your other leg daily for areas or signs of breakdown – if any spots arise, please call your doctor and schedule an appointment.
- Wash your liners with soap and water by hand (**Figure S**) after use each day and hang them on the provided stand to dry (**Figure T**).



- You can wash your socks in the washer and dryer.
- To clean your shrinker, hand or machine wash (gentle/delicate), and you can machine dry on low or air dry.
- If your prosthesis becomes dirty, you can spot clean it with a washcloth.
- During the summer months, do not let your leg remain in a car for extended periods of time.
- Take care not to let any pets or animals get hold of your prosthesis, liners, socks, shrinker, charger or any other components of your prosthesis.
- Make sure nothing is in your socket before putting it on.
- Never wear your shrinker under your liner.



### Tip from Lee

**"A good time to wash the liners is right after you remove your prosthesis."**

Clean your limb and liner by hand every day. Socks and shrinkers are machine washable. Spot clean your prosthesis as needed.

## Frequently asked questions

### ***Can I shower in my prosthesis?***

Prostheses are not meant to be worn in the shower unless a specially designed shower leg is used.

### ***Will it hurt when I walk?***

Some of the pressures on the limb are desired and may take some getting used to, but there should be no pain when you walk.

### ***How long until I am able to walk without a cane or walker?***

This will vary from person to person. Things such as your physical condition before amputation and how consistent you are with therapy and home exercise program will all help facilitate unaided walking.

### ***How often will I need to see my prosthetist?***

In the beginning months, your appointments will be frequent. They will become more spaced out as you progress into a more mature amputee. You will have follow-up appointments, but please call and schedule an appointment if needed. Once you become a mature amputee, it is best to continue to visit your prosthetist at least 2 times a year.

### ***How long will my prosthesis last?***

How long your prosthesis lasts depends on how your limb changes in size as your limb matures. This is different for each person. Generally speaking, your preparatory prosthesis will last around 6–10 months (it could vary based on your specific situation). Your definitive prosthesis will last 3–5 years.

### ***Will I be able to return to work?***

Yes, it may take some time to rehab and you may need to take a different role or modify your previous role, but it is possible to return to work. Our goal is to assist you in returning to work.



### **Tip from Lee**

**“Multiple apps are available to help you track your diet and exercise. Find one of each that you like, learn to use them and use them religiously. Monitor your fitness, diet, food and body.”**



***What is the difference between phantom pain and phantom sensation?***

Phantom pain is excruciating pain triggered by nerves that were surgically cut during your amputation. Phantom sensation is feeling parts of your limb that are no longer there – for example, like your toes are itching, cramping or tingling. This is also due to the nerves that were surgically cut during your amputation, but it is not as painful as phantom pain.

***What kind of shoes can I wear with my prosthesis?***

Tennis shoes that are not too tight nor loose/sliding around are desired. For people with above-knee amputations, shoes with the same heel height are strongly recommended. Shoes of varying heel heights change the alignment of your prosthesis, and thus the way your knee responds while walking. It is of utmost importance to wear shoes that protect your sound-side foot.



***There are red marks when I take my prosthesis off. Is this OK?***

This depends on where the red marks are. You may see red marks when you are first adjusting to your prosthesis. The red areas represent pressure-tolerant areas. There should not be any red areas on boney parts of your leg. Any redness that lasts longer than 30 minutes should be looked at by your prosthetist. Please schedule an appointment if this occurs.

***What if I my residual limb becomes lodged in my prosthesis?***

Roll your liner down, then apply soapy water between your skin and liner. You should be able to wiggle your leg out of your liner. Please call our main office (864-522-3880) if you need to speak with one of our clinicians.

***What if my prosthesis gets wet?***

Rinse it with clean water and leave it upside down to dry out. Do not let water pool in your foot or socket.