

Limb prosthesis maintenance

You're the user of your prosthesis and you depend on things working to do what you want to do. Think about routine maintenance and repairs for your prosthesis like you do with parts of your body (like your teeth and the maintenance and repairs by your dentist).

You need to go to the prosthetist to have the regular maintenance checks on your prosthesis, and then also have the prosthetist do the repairs when there is a problem. There are also conditions under the prosthesis warranty that you must keep, which means you can't try to repair or fix your prosthesis yourself.

If you look after your prosthesis and do the basic maintenance outlined below, it helps to prevent inconvenient breakdowns. Breakdowns can put you at risk.

You must routinely take the prosthesis to the prosthetist for a check, maintenance and review at LEAST once a year. Small adjustments can make a big difference.

Ask your prosthetist to send you a reminder to make an appointment when the yearly or 6-monthly maintenance and review is due.

You also visit the prosthetist for repairs.

Your funder (e.g. icare) has already paid for your prosthesis warranty and annual service plan with the prosthetist at the time of purchase.

There are basic tasks to care for your prosthesis that you need to do, so it will work well and last longer. **As the owner of the prosthesis, you have these responsibilities.**

1. First you need to:

- Have a basic understanding of how the prosthesis works. Ask your prosthetist to explain.
- Pick the same day every week to routinely check for any signs of wear and tear of your equipment, e.g. cracking in the socket, damage or loose parts, tears in the liner or sock, worn rubbers on a walking aid.
- Keep your prosthesis clean and dry to prevent build-up of dirt and bacteria.
- Prevent water damage unless your prosthesis is waterproof.
- Store your prosthesis properly when you are not wearing it. Put it somewhere safe, so it isn't bumped. When you take your prosthesis off, don't leave it in a hot environment such as in the sun in the car, or near an oven or radiator.

2. Make an appointment with the prosthetist immediately if:

- There is something loose or damaged
- Your prosthesis is not working as it should, or something doesn't feel right
- You think there may be something wrong
- The socket is not fitting (if its loose or too tight)
- There is damage to any part of the prosthesis
- There are new or unusual noises
- You have redness and pressure areas, injuries or more pain from using your prosthesis

Try to reduce or avoid using your prosthesis until the appointment with the prosthetist. In the meantime, you could ask your prosthetist about temporary solutions.

3. General cleaning

Prosthesis

DON'T

- Clean any of the prosthetic components
- Adjust screws, bolts, hinges or other parts of the prosthesis or attempt to repair it yourself. You will breach the warranty conditions and cause permanent damage.
- Add or coat the socket with anything, e.g. talcum powder, packing material

Prosthesis

DO

- Wipe down the outside and inside of the socket, and the outside along the whole prosthesis with a soft damp cloth with mild soap OR alcohol-based cleanser if advised by the manufacturer.
- Be careful not to wipe or get wet the mechanisms or electronic components.

For upper limb prosthesis only

- If myoelectric—follow manufacturer's instructions to care for the battery.

Don't carry heavy things or hang heavy items off the fingers of the prosthetic device.

Liner maintenance

DO

- Wear a clean liner every day.
- Wash your liner daily with mild soap and water.
- Pat dry your liner with a towel and leave to air dry overnight. Do not dry the liner in the sun, clothes dryer or in front of a heater.
- Keep the liner free from dirt, fluff and dust, ink from pens or newspapers, lipstick.
- Check your liner for tears.

Sock maintenance

DO

- Wear a clean sock every day.
- Stump socks can be machine washed but others need to be washed by hand. Check with the manufacturer. If the sock is NOT machine washable:
 - Wash your sock by hand with soapy water.
 - Avoid twisting, wringing out or rubbing wet socks as they will lose shape.
 - Roll out the sock in a towel to remove extra water dry and hang up to dry. Do not dry the sock in the clothes dryer or in front of a heater.
- Check for loss of shape.

4. Develop a plan for when something breaks down

Ask your prosthetist to give you some ideas on how you can plan for what you should do when something breaks down. For example, know:

- Whether there are loan components or limbs available
- The options when you are travelling or on holidays and away from your usual prosthetist
- How often specific parts need replacing, and the procedure (e.g. pre-ordering). If you 'work' your prosthesis hard because of the nature of your work, sport and daily routine, ask your prosthetist if this affects how often parts need replacing.
- If you can't have an appointment to see your prosthetist, ask if you can have a telehealth consultation.