

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Care of your residual limb

It is best to look after your residual limb (amputated leg) just as before, when it were your whole leg.

Hygiene

Wearing a prosthesis may result in perspiration which will be trapped as air cannot circulate.

- Wash your residual limb every morning and evening with a mild soap and water.
- Dry your leg thoroughly and do not use any medicated creams or oils unless advised to do so by your doctor, nurse, therapist or prosthetist.
- Clean your socket or liner daily, and use clean stump socks next to your skin.
- Massage moisturiser into the skin before bed. Be sparing. Avoid heavily perfumed or greasy moisturisers.
- Check your residual limb daily for any signs of broken skin, redness or blistering. Use a mirror if necessary. Do this more frequently if it is sore.
- Keep cuts and blisters clean.
- If any skin problems persist, seek advice.
- If you have been given a shrinker sock or light elastic bandage to wear, continuing to wear it when you are not wearing your artificial limb to prevent swelling and shape change of the residual limb.

Sweating

Excessive sweating is not unusual but can cause problems for your skin and your socket suspension, especially in hot climates. Antiperspirants can be applied daily to reduce sweating. Examples recommended are Odaban, Dryclor, Mitchum and Alps (prosthetic specific).

They are available from most chemists. Ask Pace clinicians for advice.

Rashes

Skin irritations are common. The following can be applied to clean skin:

- E45 – in very thin quantities as it can clog the pores and irritate
- Diprobase
- Calendular
- Antifungal – only when prescribed

Massage

Massage can be soothing if your residual limb is sore, painful or hypersensitivity, and should be performed gently. Sometimes light tapping can help too. It can help to control and lessen phantom pains and sensations.

Massage can also stimulate the circulation to aid healing and reduce swelling.

If you have thickened and adherent (stuck down) scar tissue, massage can help the skin to become more supple. This will reduce any problems that may occur inside the socket.

The clinicians will show you how to do this massage.

Care of your remaining limb

Your remaining limb is doing more than half the work on a daily basis. It is important to look after the condition of your skin and not to overstrain the joints, muscles and ligaments.

- Wash your foot daily and dry it carefully.
- Check your foot for swelling, changes in colour, pain, sores and breaks.
- If you have any skin problems with your remaining foot see your doctor, chiropodist or district nurse.
- Take care when choosing shoes to make sure that they fit correctly. A supportive shoe will help foot control. A rubber sole will aid shock absorption and provide improved grip to prevent slipping.
- Don't wear socks with tight elastic tops if you have swelling.
- Don't wear socks with thick seams if you have reduced sensation.
- Wear cotton socks that absorb sweat best and remember to change them everyday.
- Don't be tempted to hop around too much – remember your remaining leg has to do extra work already. This can bring on arthritis in later life.
- If you are experiencing foot pain, seek advice from your doctor or therapist.

Smoking

Smoking compromises your skin condition, your lung capacity and your blood vessels to vital organs such as your heart and brain. When you wear an artificial limb it is important for you to be as healthy as possible so that you can compensate for the missing limb.

Smoking can delay the healing of any wounds and it may cause any circulatory disease to deteriorate in your remaining leg.

Therefore it is very important to **STOP SMOKING** to prevent this.

Your doctor, nurse or therapist will be able to put you in touch with organisations that can help you to quit.

Diabetes

If you have diabetes it is very important to keep your blood sugar levels well- controlled:

- To allow healing to occur and reduce the risk of infection after your amputation, and
- To prevent further complications.

Your physiotherapy regime may reduce your sugar levels and your diet and medication may need to be changed accordingly. If you have increased your walking as a result of having a new leg prosthesis, you should monitor yourself closely.

You must let the clinicians know if you have diabetes or if you feel unwell.

Exercise

Participating in exercise or sport will help you to remain fit, strong and healthy. This will help you to compensate better for any disability and help you to remain active and independent.

Ask your physiotherapist for advice.