

## Skin Care for the Amputee

*The skin is the body's first line of defense against infection and disease. Proper care of your skin and residual limb will prevent skin breakdown thereby reducing the chance of infection and promoting a normal, active life style. The residual limb is particularly susceptible to fungal and bacterial growth since it is confined in an airless socket throughout the day. Because air does not circulate properly around the residual limb, accumulated heat and trapped perspiration create an environment conducive to infection.*

**SKIN CARE:** Daily cleansing is essential to maintain the skin's health. Cleansing should be done in the evening, since damp skin within a socket is more likely to become irritated.

Thoroughly wash the skin with warm water and an anti-bacterial soap. Rinse with warm water being careful to remove all soap residues, since soap film can contribute to skin irritation. The skin should be gently and completely towel dried.

It is often advisable to apply a small amount of medicated cream or lotion to the entire area after the skin has been thoroughly dried. This helps maintain the skin's elasticity and suppleness, better enabling it to withstand the extensive pressure exerted on it by the prosthesis. It also reduces skin breakdown, callous formation and extensive toughening of the skin.

**SOCKET CARE:** The prosthetic socket must also be washed every evening. Because of its design, it naturally harbors bacteria, fungi, and discarded skin tissue. Appliances with valves are particularly susceptible and require special attention.

Wash the socket thoroughly using warm water and medicated soap. Rinse soap completely, dry with absorbent towels and allow air-drying overnight.

In appliances with valves, remove the valve, force soapy water into the valve and rinse well. The socket should be dry before wearing (unless donning is by "wet - fit" method), since dampness can cause skin irritation. Rubbing alcohol can be used for cleaning plastic sockets. It will assist in controlling bacteria as well as reducing perspiration odor.

**SOCK CARE:** The prosthetic sock will need daily cleansing. Serving as a cushion between the skin and socket wall, it will absorb perspiration throughout the day. It is suggested that you change socks at least once during the day.

The sock(s) should be washed in a mild detergent and rinsed well in warm water to remove all soap residues. Excess water should be squeezed — not — wrung - from the sock.

Again, the sock(s) should be thoroughly dry before wearing. A tennis ball or sock drying form can be used to ensure the sock retains its proper shape while drying. Some amputees use small amounts of talc or cornstarch between the residual limb and sock to help control perspiration.

**SHEATH CARE:** Similar to the prosthetic sock, the sheath will absorb perspiration throughout the day and will need daily cleansing.

Hand washing with a mild detergent is the preferred method of cleaning. The sheath is generally manufactured from artificial fibers requiring delicate handling. Silicone sheaths should be washed in mild soap and water. Do not wring out. Allow dripping dry for 32 - 48 hours after washing.

**INSERT CARE:** It is recommended to wash with mild soap, rinse and towel dry. If the insert is made from silicone, lightly powder with talc to remove tackiness.

**SKIN PROBLEMS:** Good hygiene and a well fitting prosthesis should keep skin healthy. However, irritation or other problems are always a possibility. Careful monitoring of the condition of the skin is essential to avert problems before they interfere with comfort or function.

*Call your prosthetist and/or physician immediately if you note any changes in the appearance of your skin.*

***Clinical Prosthetics & Orthotics, LLC**, practitioners are available to answer all of your questions. We are committed to providing the highest quality services, patient care and products.*

**Please do not hesitate to call!**