

# Practical tips for prosthetic and residual limb care when exercising



**When playing sports, enjoying leisure time, or kicking a ball around with your kids—it's important to take extra care to prevent your residual limb from getting sore or injured. And don't forget to regularly check your prosthesis to make sure it's in good condition!**

## Pre-activity

### Tip 1 – Residual limb care – Washing

Ensure your residual limb (stump) is clean, especially when taking part in physical activity. Wash daily with warm water and mild antiseptic soap to reduce the build-up of bacteria. Perform a patch test before using any new soap.

### Tip 2 – Residual limb care – Drying

Dry your residual limb by patting with a soft towel. Ensure it is completely dry before putting on your prosthesis to avoid issues like poor suspension, bacterial growth or skin damage.

### Tip 3 – Residual limb care – Checking

Physical activity can create or exacerbate existing residual limb issues. Establish a daily care routine. Check for changes in skin, scars, or marks. Contact your healthcare provider if you notice any issues.

## Prosthetic maintenance – Give your prosthetic an M.O.T.

### Tip 4 – Prosthetic limb maintenance

If you are starting a new type of physical activity, then regularly check your prosthetic limb for cracks, splits, rough/sharp edges, broken cables and dirt. Clean with a soft paint brush and check components and moveable joints for damage or loose screws before activity.

### Tip 5 – Prosthetic limb/s hygiene

Keep your prosthetic limb clean. Wash the socket and liner with water or a suitable sterilising solution (do not use detergent). Ensure they are dry before use.

### Tip 6 – Residual limb socks

Wear clean stump socks daily. Change socks during the day if needed. Wash socks with warm water to prolong their life. We recommend always having spare socks with you.

### Tip 7 – Bring a limb bag

Carry a limb bag with essentials like spare belts, gel pads, wipes, antiseptic spray, spare socks, duct tape, blister plasters, paint brush, flannel/microfibre towel and plastic bag. Don't forget your crutches.



## During activity

### Tip 8 – Suspension

Ensure your prosthetic limb has adequate suspension. This can be challenging as it depends on the type and fit of your prosthetic(s) and your amount of exertion and volume loss during activity. Sweating can also impact on your socket suspension. Consult your prosthetist if you experience issues.

### Tip 9 – Warm up properly

Warm up before exercise to prevent injuries. As an amputee, whether you have an upper or lower limb amputation, it is important to specifically stretch your trunk side flexors and other body parts.

## How to manage sweating and changes in volume

### • Change socks frequently:

Carry extra socks and change into fresh, dry ones as needed, even before finishing your activity.

### • Extra socks:

Add more socks if sweating causes shrinkage. Increase the number or thickness of socks to maintain the fit of your socket.

### • Anti-perspirants:

Use preparations like Dri-Clor, Anhydrous Forte, or Mitchum anti-perspirants containing aluminium chloride. Do a patch test and avoid scented products to prevent skin reactions.

### • Nappy liners:

Wrap unperfumed nappy liners around your residual limb to keep the skin dry. Monitor the liner's position and its impact on your limb.

### • Sweat headband:

For below-the-knee prostheses, use a large sweat headband inside the liner at the top. Ensure it fits well without being too tight or slipping down.

## Here's a stretch for your tightest side flexor:

Stand with your feet apart, raise your arm on the amputated side over your head, place your other hand on your hip, and lean towards the non-amputated side. You should feel a nice opening sensation from your shoulder to your hip.

## Practical tips for prosthetic and residual limb care when exercising

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### Tip 10 – Volume changes

The residual limb will change volume during physical activity and sport. Manage sweating and volume changes by changing socks frequently, using anti-perspirants, and monitoring the fit of your prosthesis.

### Tip 11 – Swelling

Swelling in a residual limb during exercise or heat occurs due to factors including increased blood flow, reduced circulation, and sweating.

### Note – If the prosthesis won't fit due to volume change:

It is important you stop wearing the prosthesis when it is too loose,

continuing to wear it can cause injury and falls.

### Tip 12 – Hydration during exercise

Stay hydrated by drinking water before, during, and after exercise. Avoid sugary drinks. Adjust your water intake based on the intensity of the activity and temperature conditions. Dehydration can exacerbate shrinkage and discomfort.

### Tip 13 – Be prepared to fall

Engage in activities to gain better control over your body and reduce the risk of falls. If you fall, try to land on your forearm and roll to the side.

## Post-activity

### Tip 14 – Cooling the body

Apply a cold compress to help regulate body temperature. Avoid using ice directly on the skin.

### Tip 15 – Rehydrate post-exercise

Rehydrate after exercise to replace fluids lost through sweating and aiding in recovery and reducing the risk of shrinkage and skin issues.

### Interventions to limit swelling

- **Proper fitting socket:**  
Ensure your prosthetic socket fits well; regular adjustments are essential.
- **Compression garments:**  
Use compression socks or sleeves to manage fluid build-up.
- **Hydration and cooling:**  
Stay hydrated and use cooling methods in hot weather.
- **Elevation and rest:**  
Elevate the limb when resting to reduce swelling.
- **Monitor and care:**  
Regularly check for irritation or pressure sores.

### If swelling occurs

- **Remove the prosthesis:**  
Reduce pressure and check your residual limb.
- **Elevation and cold compresses:**  
Elevate the limb and use cool compresses (avoid ice).
- **Massage and compression:**  
Gently massage and use compression garments if no pain is present.
- **Seek professional help:**  
Consult a healthcare provider if swelling persists.

### If the prosthesis won't fit

- **Do not force it:**  
Forcing it can cause injury.
- **Reduce swelling:**  
Focus on reducing swelling first.
- **Use alternative aids:**  
Use crutches or a wheelchair temporarily.
- **Consult your prosthetist:**  
Get an emergency prosthetic appointment.

Regular communication with your healthcare team is vital for managing swelling and ensuring proper prosthetic fit. If you get a sore or blister repeatedly in the same place, see your prosthetist. A slight adjustment may make all the difference.

**Disclaimer:** Before taking part in any new leisure activity, physical activity, exercise or sports contact your G.P. or limb centre healthcare team and follow any advice that is specific to your needs and ability. If you experience any pain, stop stretching and consult a GP.

**Credit:** This guide was adapted from the original Practical Tips written by Penny Broomhead and reviewed by Kiera Roche, Dr. Miranda Asher, David Hayton Hill and Dr Ross Wadey.

This condensed version maintains all the essential content and tips from the original document. If you need any further adjustments, please let us know!