

Having a custom-made silicone contour prosthesis (artificial body part)

Prosthesis Clinic

Information for Patients

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What is a contour prosthesis?

A contour prosthesis is an artificial body part, usually made from silicone that replicates a missing area of the body. They are coloured to best match the skin tone and blend in with the surrounding area.

Custom prostheses are made specifically for each person. They are made for use when a body part is missing. This may be after a traumatic event, injury or operation.

A contour prosthesis attempts to restore the natural shape of the intended body part. Common contour prostheses are fabricated for the legs or hip areas. Custom made contour prostheses are made by trained staff (a prosthetist) at the Prosthesis Clinic.

How is it held in place on the body?

A contour prosthesis is usually held in place by the defect itself (anatomically). The prosthesis can be further secured by other means described below.

Held in place by medical glue (adhesive):

Medical glue is a common method for attaching a prosthesis. It is applied to the prosthesis, which is then put onto the body. There are various types of adhesive:

- water-based (white).
- solvent-based (clear).
- adhesive strips (double-sided tape).

Adhesives can be fiddly to apply and clean at first, however after some practice it will become part of your daily routine.

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Held in place by your clothing:

Some prostheses can be attached using physical means, such as being placed between the skin and an item of clothing, such as tights/stockings, well-fitting tops/vests and trousers or a pressure garment. This usually does not involve adhesives, but may be used in combination.

Sometimes it is possible that the prosthesis uses the shape of your body to stay in position. This method takes away the need for glue.

Held in place by a silicone adhesive:

A silicone adhesive may be used to give a sticky fitting surface which helps to hold the prosthesis in place.

Types of filling

- **Gel:**

Where greater flexibility is needed, the prosthesis may be filled with silicone gel, covered with a silicone skin.

- **Hollow (air):**

The weight of the prosthesis will be kept to a minimum to help it stay in position, so it may be made hollow or have a spongy centre.

- **Silicone sponge:**

The weight is reduced by filling the prosthesis with a lighter weight sponge material. There is usually a silicone skin covering the sponge.

How will my prosthesis be made?

There are several steps to making a contour prosthesis, This may include taking impressions, moulds, carving wax and colouring silicone to match the colour of your skin.

You may need to have up to 4 appointments before it is made, and then a fitting appointment once it is ready.

The process will be discussed with you by your clinician at the start of any treatment plan.

Positioning and removing your prosthesis

Trained staff (a prosthetist) at the Prosthesis Clinic , will show you the correct way to place and remove your prosthesis depending on the way it needs to be attached.

Putting your prosthesis on in the right place can take a bit of practice at first, but it will get easier as you become more confident.

When can I wear my prosthesis?

You will be advised on wearing the prosthesis. Usually it can be put on in the morning and worn throughout the day, or determined by your needs.

We advise that you do not sleep in your prosthesis as this is an opportunity to allow the skin to breath.

Can I wear my prosthesis for sporting activities?

Prostheses can be worn for most sporting activities, although we may suggest removing it to avoid loss or damage during more active or contact sports.

Your prosthesis is made from a material called silicone. You may find that the chemicals in swimming pools have a bleaching effect over time on the silicone. If you go swimming you will need to rinse the prosthesis in clean water as soon as possible once you are out of the pool.

Maintenance and care

All prostheses need regular cleaning and inspection to maintain and help prevent build-up of bacteria. This will be explained to you at time of fitting the prosthesis.

Before touching or handling your contour prosthesis always wash your hands with soap and water. Care must be taken with the prosthesis, the edges may be very thin and prone to tearing if removed too quickly.

You should clean your prosthesis every time you remove it. Carefully clean your prosthesis with a solution of warm water and scent free, colour free soap. Do not rub aggressively but it is ok to use gauze or very soft toothbrush to clean. Extra care should be taken at the fine edges as they may tear, and on the external surface so you do not remove any of the surface colour.

Rinse clean and pat dry with a tissue or towel.

Cigarette smoke and strong chemicals will discolour a prosthesis quickly; please try to avoid contact with these.

Where should I keep my prosthesis when I'm not wearing it?

Make sure that your prosthesis is clean and dry before storing it.

Store in a dry container or drawer away from direct sunlight and heat sources. Sunlight can affect the colour of the silicone. If your prosthesis has fine edges, heat (such as from radiators) can cause these to curl.

Will I have follow-up appointments after my prosthesis has been fitted?

After you have been fitted with a new prosthesis you may be asked to return to clinic to check the fit and how you are managing the prosthesis. You can use this time to ask any more questions you may have.

If everything is fine, as long as you continue to wear your prosthesis you will continue to have review appointments with your clinician to monitor it. The frequency will depend on the type of prosthesis you have.

How long will my prosthesis last?

It will likely need adjusting and/ or replacing over time.

Prostheses can vary in life span due to many factors. Your prosthetist will be able to advise you when they think you are in need of a new one. A replacement prosthesis can be made for you if needed.

What should I do if I have a problem or have any questions?

If you have any problems with your prosthesis, please contact the service on the telephone numbers below for help and advice (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5.30pm):

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery: | 0116 258 5671 |
| Maxillofacial Laboratory/ Prosthesis Clinic: | 0116 258 5255 |



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