

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

Prosthesis Clinic

Information for Patients

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What is a prosthesis?

A prosthesis is an artificial body part made from a silicone and/or acrylic material. They are coloured to best match the skin tone and blend in with the surrounding area of the body.

Custom prostheses are made specifically for each person and are made for use when a body part is missing. This may be after a traumatic event/ injury, due to disease, or was missing at birth. They may be used when it is not possible to rebuild/repair the part of the body during an operation. Custom prostheses are made by trained staff at the Prosthesis Clinic (a prosthetist). Examples include finger, nipple, nose, ear and eyes.

How is it held in place on the body?

There are different ways of attaching a prosthesis depending on where it is needed. This can be different types of skin glue, implants or using items like glasses to hold it in place.

Held in place by medical glue (adhesive):

Medical glue is the simplest method for attaching a prosthesis. It is put on 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).
- tacky gel (sticky silicone backing).

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Adhesives can be fiddly to put on to prostheses and difficult to clean on when taken off, however after some practice it will become part of your daily routine.

Held in place by physical/ mechanical means:

A prosthesis may be put in place using physical means, such as being fixed to glasses or a head-band. This usually does not involve adhesives, but may be used in combination.

Another method (frequently used in eye-sockets) is to use a gel which flattens to push in and regains its shape once in the eye socket. The prosthesis uses the shape of the body to stay in position. This method can take away the need for messy glues. This method only works if the body will allow for a close fit to make sure the part sits in the best place.

Held in place by an implant:

A titanium screw (similar to a dental implant) is placed into the bone with the top part (abutment) remaining out of the skin. A part is then included into the back of the prosthesis to attach to the implant. This may be:

- a bar in the implant with clips in the prosthesis.
- magnets built into the prosthesis to click easily onto the implant.

Implants can provide a very easy method of secure attachment for those who are suitable, such as ears.

How will my prosthesis be made?

There are different stages for making a prosthesis, this may include using impressions, moulds, carving wax and colouring silicone to match the colour of your skin.

You may need to have up to 5 outpatient appointments before it is made, and then a fitting appointment once it is ready.

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

Positioning and removing your prosthesis

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

Putting the prosthesis in the right place can take a bit of practice at first, but this will become 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 as you need it.

We advise that you do not sleep in your prosthesis as this is an opportunity to allow the skin to breathe. This also avoids undue pressure on implants whilst you are sleeping.

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 prosthesis always wash your hands with soap and water.

Care must be taken with the prosthesis. A prosthesis which has very thin edges is prone to tearing if removed too quickly.

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

Rinse clean and pat dry with a tissue or towel.

If you have an implant held prosthesis, we will advise you on how to also keep the surrounding skin and component parts clean to prevent infection.

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 any 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. 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?

They will need adjustments and/ or replacements periodically.

Prostheses can vary in life span due to many factors. Your prosthetist will let you know 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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