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. We colour the prothesis to best match your skin tone. It should blend in with the rest of the body.

We make custom prostheses just for the patients needs. We make it when a body part is missing. This may be after a traumatic event/ injury, due to disease, or was missing at birth. We use it when it is not possible to rebuild/repair the part of the body during an operation. Custom prostheses are made by trained staff (a prosthetist) at the Prosthesis Clinic. They make prothesis finger, nipple, nose, ear, eyes, and more.

How is it held in place on the body?

We use different ways of attaching a prosthesis. It depends 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).

Adhesives can be fiddly to put on to prostheses and difficult to clean on when taken off. 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. This can be as being fixed to glasses or a head-band. This often does not need adhesives. You can use them in combination with adhesives.

Another method (often used in eye-sockets) is to use a gel which flattens to push in and regains it 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:

We will need to place a titanium screw into the bone with the top part (abutment) remaining out of the skin. This is similar to a dental implant. 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 have 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. It can include making 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. You will then have a fitting appointment when it is ready.

We will talk about the process with you at the start of any treatment plan.

Positioning and removing your prosthesis

A prosthetist at the Prosthesis Clinic will show you the correct way to put on and take off your prosthesis.

Putting the prosthesis in the right place can take a bit of practice at first. This will become easier as you become more confident.

When can I wear my prosthesis?

We will let you know when you should wear the prosthesis. You can often put on in the morning and wear it throughout the day. Or wear it as you need it.

We advise that you do not sleep in your prosthesis. This is the time to let the skin breath. This also avoids pressure on the implants whilst you are sleeping.

Can I wear my prosthesis for sporting activities?

You can wear prostheses for most sporting activities. We may suggest removing it to avoid loss or damage during more active or contact sports like rugby and football.

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. This is to help maintain and prevent build-up of bacteria. We will explain this to you at time of fitting the prosthesis.
- Before touching or handling your prosthesis always wash your hands with soap and water.
- You must take care with the prosthesis. A prosthesis which has very thin edges can get tears 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. You should take extra care if there are fine edges as they may tear and on the outside 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 skin around it and the 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 am 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 fitting?

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. How often you get will depend on the type of prosthesis you have.

How long will my prosthesis last?

They will need adjustments and/ or replacements routinely.

How long a prostheses lasts depends on 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 phone numbers below for help and advice, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm:

Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery:	**0116 258 5671**
Maxillofacial Laboratory/ Prosthesis Clinic:	**0116 258 5255**

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice
Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

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If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead
or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net

We are a research hospital and you may be asked to take part in research

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