

# Caring for Your Skin

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At this phase in your rehabilitation, your amputation should have healed sufficiently and you may be using a prosthetic device. If so, daily inspection of and care for the skin on your residual limb is essential for success with your prosthesis. Minor cuts, blisters and rashes can quickly become more than an annoyance if they limit your wearing of your prosthesis.

## Daily Skin Care

1. Every day, or more often if necessary, wash your residual limb with a mild or antibacterial soap and lukewarm water. Rinse thoroughly with clean water to remove all soap.
2. Dry your skin by patting it with a towel. Be sure your residual limb is completely dry before putting on your prosthesis. Allowing 15 minutes of air-drying before applying your prosthesis should ensure that the skin is thoroughly dry.
3. Consult your prosthetist before using moisturizing creams or lotions. Vaseline or petroleum-based lotions degrade some types of prosthetic liners. Only use softening lotions when your skin is at risk of cracking or peeling. If a moisturizing lotion is needed, it is best to apply it at night or at other times when you will not be wearing your prosthesis. Do not apply lotions to any open area.
4. If needed, applying an antiperspirant roll-on deodorant to the residual limb can help you control odor and perspiration. Do not apply antiperspirant to any open area.
5. Do not use alcohol-based products on your residual limb; they dry out the skin and can contribute to cracking or peeling.
6. Do not shave your residual limb; pressure from the prosthetic socket on "stubble" can cause the hair to grow inward, become painful, and, in the worst cases, even become infected. Never use chemical hair removers on your residual limb.
7. Avoid prolonged soaking in warm bathtubs or hot tubs because this may cause increased swelling in your residual limb.

## Inspection of Your Residual Limb

1. Regular inspection of your residual limb using a long-handled mirror will help you identify skin problems early.
2. Initially, inspections should be done whenever you remove your prosthesis. Later on, most amputees find daily inspection sufficient for the early

identification of skin problems.

3. Inspect all areas of your residual limb. Remember to inspect the back of your residual limb and all skin creases and bony areas.
4. Look for any signs of skin irritation, blisters or red marks that do not fade within 10 minutes of removing your prosthesis. Report any unusual skin problems to a member of your rehabilitation team.

## Daily Foot Care

For lower-extremity amputees, it is important to maintain the health of your remaining foot. This is especially important if you have diabetes or if you have decreased circulation or sensation in your lower extremities.

Your daily routine should include the following:

1. Wash and dry your foot properly: Use a mild soap, rinse thoroughly, and dry your skin by blotting or patting, making sure to dry between your toes.
2. Inspect your foot daily: Check for blisters, cuts and cracking.
3. Protect your foot from injury: Wear shoes or slippers at all times, and check your shoes every time you put them on for tears, rough edges or sharp objects.

## Perspiration

Perspiration may increase following an amputation for a couple of reasons. One reason has to do with decreased body surface following an amputation. You may be perspiring the same amount, but it is concentrated over a smaller body surface. Another reason is that during prosthetic use, your residual limb is encased in a completely or partially airtight socket that does not allow sweat to evaporate. In most cases, daily bathing and the application of an antiperspirant is sufficient to control this. If odor or heavy perspiration continues to bother you, discuss other available treatment options with your physician.

