

## Care of your Prosthesis

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A silicone prosthesis is robust and should last many years with good care. Below are some simple ways to maintain it in good condition.

1. Wear your prosthesis in a well-fitting bra with an adequate cup size and comfortable underband.
2. Wash your prosthesis daily, even if wearing it in a pocketed bra. Treat it like your skin using warm, soapy water and dry with a soft towel. Check the specific care instructions in the box your prosthesis was supplied in.
3. If you like to apply moisturiser after a bath or shower, use a non-perfumed type as the chemicals in scented brands can damage a prosthesis.
4. Do not use talcum powder on skin coming into contact with a prosthesis as it may cause skin irritation.
5. When not wearing your prosthesis, please keep it in the box to maintain its shape.
6. You can wear your prosthesis for occasional swimming in a pool or the sea but please remember to shower the sea water/chlorine off after you swim. If you swim regularly you may wish to consider purchasing an additional prosthesis specifically for use when swimming.
7. Take care to avoid sharp objects which can puncture your prosthesis, including pet's claws. If this happens the sticky silicone inside will be exposed but will not leak out. It is not harmful and can be covered temporarily with a plaster or clingfilm.

8. Self-supporting or stick-on prostheses are a recent development which may suit some women, particularly those who are very active. Self-supporting prostheses stick directly onto your skin and they may feel more natural and secure than other types, which simply fit into a bra cup. However, contact prostheses are not provided free of charge by the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust. If you have radiotherapy following your mastectomy, a stick on prosthesis is not recommended to be worn until 6 months following completion of treatment. A contact breast prosthesis requires specific cleaning products which you will need to purchase separately when the initial supplies run out.

### Replacing your Prosthesis

Prosthetic fitting clinics are run by professional fitters from two of the main suppliers of mastectomy wear: Amoena and Trulife. The clinics are held in the breast care nurse rooms next to the Breast Care Unit and your appointment will usually take half an hour.

You should leave a prosthetic fitting appointment with a prosthesis that gives you a good balance and feels comfortable.

However, when you get home, if you are unhappy with your prosthesis please contact the Breast Care Nurses' secretary within two weeks, and we will endeavour to arrange another appointment with the fitter, and replace it as soon as possible. **We will only be able to replace a prosthesis that is returned in its original box, and ask that you revert to wearing your old prosthesis/soft prosthesis until we can see you again.**

A silicone prosthesis can last for up to 10 years if well cared for, however you may need a replacement ahead of this time. If you change weight or shape you may also need a replacement. Please make an appointment to reassess your prosthesis by contacting the Breast Care Nurses' secretary if you think this is the case.

If your prosthesis is damaged due to a manufacturing fault within the three year warranty, you will be entitled to a new prosthesis, free of charge. **Please ensure that you return the prosthesis to us in its original box so that it can be returned to the manufacturer.**

If the damage to your prosthesis is deemed to be due to poor care, the hospital will have to charge you for a replacement.

If you lose your prosthesis you will also be charged for a new one.

We are sorry that we are unable to send replacement prostheses to patients in the post on request. Please arrange an appointment to be seen in person, we will assess your prosthesis and refit it if appropriate.

## Do I have to pay for a prosthesis?

### NHS Patients

If you have had your surgery on the NHS or reverted to NHS care for follow up you will be entitled to a prosthesis free of charge, subject to the conditions already mentioned in this leaflet.

### Private Patients

Private patients can access the services of the prosthetic fitter at the RD&E Hospital but are required to pay for their original and any replacement prostheses. Some health insurance companies will cover the cost of a prosthesis, check with your specific health insurance policy. You will be invoiced for your prosthesis by the Hospital.

## Breast Reconstruction

Breast reconstruction options can be discussed on an individual basis. It is generally offered either at the time of mastectomy or as a delayed procedure. If you would like to find out more about breast reconstruction, please speak to your surgeon or Breast Care Nurse. Your breast surgeon may be able to offer this or refer you to a plastic surgeon who can tell you what can be achieved and how they would do the operation.

*If you have any concerns about your prosthesis or would like to make an appointment for an assessment, please contact:*

**Jackie Taylor**

*Secretary to Breast Care Nurses*

**01392 402707**

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by RD&E staff undertaking procedures at the RD&E hospitals.

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