

# Prosthetic limb prescription

## Questions and answers you may have about your prosthetic limb prescription

### Who decides what type of artificial limb/prosthesis I will have?

You will have been assessed by members of the team and will have shared with them what you want to achieve and what you need to do to be independent at home, work and undertaking leisure activities.

The Prosthetist will consider all this information along with your current medical condition and will choose a custom made, modular limb to suit your needs.

The prosthetist is familiar with many different components that make up the limbs and uses this knowledge to ensure that the limb meets your requirements and is safe.

### What will my prosthetic leg look like?

The prosthetic limb will consist of a socket, a metal knee joint if you require one, a shin tube and a metal foot. The socket is usually flesh coloured and the foot will be encased in a flesh coloured foot shell. The prosthetists can have a foam shape (cosmesis) applied to your leg and contour it to look like a leg. Alternatively you can ask for the leg to be left without the cosmetic foam so that the metal components are showing. Discuss the options with your Prosthetist.

### Can I have a silicone cover for my prosthesis?

High definition silicone covers are not provided on the NHS. Normal silicone covers are not recommended as they are very heavy and if you have a prosthetic knee it may impede the function of the knee and can become baggy with use.

Other types of cosmetic cover are available. Ask your prosthetist to show you the options that are available.

### Can I have any limb that I choose?

The limb and its component parts will be selected bearing in mind what you need to be able to do, your weight, height, strength, stamina and potential level of mobility. The environment that you use will also be considered - whether you use the limb mainly indoors or you walk outside and if you walk on slopes, stairs or uneven ground. If you need to have a knee joint, careful consideration will be given as to whether you need a knee that remains locked, or a knee that you can unlock yourself manually or a free knee which moves freely all the time until you push back on it. The choice of knee is an important one as it will affect your ability to walk safely.

Because there are so many components on the market it will be difficult for you to choose the one that is best for you. It may however be possible to try more than one component so that you can judge which one is best for you. The prosthetist will talk to you about why they have chosen a particular component and why it is right for you and you will have the opportunity to ask them questions and make sure that they have considered all the facts. Please ask any questions you may have, the prosthetist will be happy to talk to you.

## **I would like a socket that is a different colour: is this possible?**

When your prosthetic limb is made the prosthetists will consider the normal colour of your skin when making your socket and applying a foam or cosmesis.

However, if you would like a more personalised limb, the team can make your socket a totally different colour and can add patterns and motifs to the limb that reflect your interests.

Ask your prosthetist for examples of what can be achieved. If you have a particular idea we can incorporate material that you provide into the design but do check with your prosthetist before you purchase anything.

## **Will an expensive component be the best one for me?**

No, this is not always the case. For example, some component feet need the user to put a lot of energy through it when walking. If you have not got the required amount of energy, it will be more difficult to walk with. Some expensive components are heavier than others; for example knees that enable you to walk over rough ground will be heavier than those for walking on the flat. If you cannot tolerate the weight it will not be beneficial to you and will prevent you walking as far.

Again, please discuss any concerns that you have with your Prosthetist.

## **Can I have a computerised knee provided by the NHS?**

NHS England has now released funding for the provision of micro-processor knees which means that some patients will be able to access one from the NHS. Patients with multiple limb loss and a risk of serious injury if they fall will automatically be considered for a micro-processor knee. There is a strict criteria that will need to be met as well as formal trials with a mechanical knee and then with the micro-processor knee to compare results before prescription will be considered. It is worth noting that these components are extremely heavy and would not be suitable for everyone. If you would like to know more information please ask a clinician in the centre.

## **Can I have a limb for sports use provided by the NHS?**

The NHS do not provide prosthetic components that can only be used for sports. For example, the 'blades' that you see in national track events are only used for running and therefore are not provided by the NHS.

## **How can my child with limb loss join in sporting activity?**

If a child ( under 18 ) needs to join in sporting activities at school we may be able to access special funding to provide a prosthetic limb that the child can use to join in sporting activities - PE lessons at school and more specialist sports.

However, the child will need to have an interest in doing sport and be able to use the limb once it has been fitted. The prosthetist will discuss this with the child and you - their parent or guardian - and explain what is available and what will assist them the most.

## **Will I be able to run and join in sporting activities with a prosthetic leg that is provided on the nhs?**

Yes. We do provide component parts in a prosthetic leg that will allow someone to run and join in leisure activities. If this is important to you, discuss this with the clinical staff as soon as possible. However, whether you can participate in these activities will depend on your general level of fitness now and how fit you were before your amputation. It is also important to consider any other medical problems that you have, that may prevent you from using the components to their full benefit. The consultant and the clinicians will be honest with you and will discuss what might or might not be possible.

## Who does the limb belong to?

The limb that you are provided with is the property of the NHS and is on loan to you for as long as you need it.

## Can I have more than one limb?

There are strict criteria for the provision of a second prosthetic leg. If you are very active and are in employment where your mobility is essential, you will be given a second limb.

If eligible, a second limb will not be provided until you have a comfortable socket and are using your limb for a substantial part of the day. Please discuss this matter with one of the members of the staff if you are concerned regarding this.

## Can I repair the limb myself?

**No.** You should not try to repair the limb yourself even if you feel that you have the vocational experience to do this. The NHS is responsible for ensuring that your prosthetic limb is maintained in good working order and to replace any worn parts. Adjusting the limb yourself may cause damage to an expensive component and may render the limb unsafe. Do not oil, grease, lubricate or use any other chemicals on the knee or foot. If your limb has broken or is making a noise, contact the centre to make an appointment.

It is important to attend the prosthetic yearly so that the limb can be checked for any wear/damage.

## Can I make modifications to the limb?

**No.** Again, you should not try to make changes to the prosthetic limb. Adding different component parts to the limb can affect the strength and safety of it. Do not apply spray paint on your limb as this will damage any working parts.

## What happens if you lose the limb?

You need to keep your prosthetic limb safe at all times. Should it get stolen or lost you should make every effort to find it and notify the police if appropriate. We have replaced lost limbs in certain circumstances but there is legislation that states that lost or damaged NHS property needs to be replaced by the individual to whom it is on loan.

## Can I have a private prosthetic limb and an NHS one?

Yes, this is possible. You will need to purchase a private limb from a private company that offer this service and who will then be responsible for that prosthetic limb on an on-going basis.

Ask for a quote for the prosthesis and the anticipated on-going maintenance before committing to a new limb privately.

You may also attend the Dorset Prosthetics Centre and be prescribed an NHS limb should you wish.

We will assess your needs and prescribe a limb appropriate for your use. If your NHS prescription and private prescription are very different you may have difficulty switching from walking with one to the other.

## Can I have a private component put into an NHS leg?

No. The Centre will only be responsible for components provided by the NHS. This is to ensure there is no confusion regarding who the limb belongs to and who is responsible for repairing it and replacing broken parts.

## Can I have a private limb that the prosthetic centre maintains?

No. This is not possible. If you have a private limb it must be maintained by the company who provided it for you.

## Can I have liners for my private limb provided on the NHS?

No. The liners to use with your privately purchased prosthetic limb must be purchased by you from the company who provided you with the private limb. The liner is an integral part of the limb prescription and must be obtained from them.

## What do I do if I have concerns about my prosthetic prescription?

In the first instance please discuss this with your prosthetist and/or the Physiotherapist working in the Prosthetics Centre. They will explain the reasons why the component parts of the prosthetic limb have been chosen to meet your specific needs. If there are still unanswered questions you will be able to make an appointment to see the Consultant in Amputee Rehabilitation to further discuss your concerns.

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