

# Residual Limb Care and Hygiene Post-Amputation



**If you have open wounds, please speak with your surgeon before washing and applying lotion.**

**Check skin often** – Skin should be monitored for changes. Increases in drainage, smells, redness and pain are all cause for concern. Speak to your physician or nurse regarding any changes in your limb.

**Dressings** – Change and clean dressings and limb according to your doctor's instruction. In general, dressings should be changed when they absorb fluid, or at least once daily. Saturated dressings will cause damage to skin. If cleared for compression therapy, shrinkers can be worn over dressings.

**Washing** – Once cleared by surgeon, residual limb should be washed daily. Use a mild soap which is free of fragrances and is pH neutral. Pat dry with towel.

**Do not pick skin** – Avoid picking or pulling loose skin and scabs; they will slough off when ready. Pulling on scabs and loose skin can cause open wounds.

**Moisturizing** – Maintaining your skin's moisture is important because dry skin is more fragile. If necessary, use a gentle, fragrance-free moisturizer. Evening is an ideal time to apply moisturizers.

**Compression therapy** – Cloth garments that help to promote healing, decrease edema and pain and prepare limb for prosthesis. Once cleared by surgeon, shrinkers and ace wraps should be worn every day and removed for bathing, dressing changes, desensitization, etc.

**Desensitization** – In addition to compression therapy, the following techniques to help decrease heightened sensations:

- **Touch** – Rub materials/ fabrics of varying textures on limb, starting with the softest fabrics, i.e. cotton balls, and working up to increasingly textured items, i.e. crumpled paper.
- **Massage** – Gently massage your limb several times per day. Kneading and manipulating tissue of the residual limb generally decreases discomfort, increases circulation, aids emotional adjustment and decreases excessive scar tissue.

**Pain management** – When recovering from surgery, it is normal to experience physical and phantom pains. Phantom pains are feeling pain in a body part that has been amputated. They are different from phantom sensations; the feeling of body parts that have been amputated.

With time and healing, your pain will subside. Your body is going through many changes as it heals. As your mind and body are connected, emotional discomfort can also increase pain levels. It will take time to adapt to your new lifestyle and find a new normal. Massaging your limb, wearing your shrinker, time and social support will all help.

In certain cases, medications may be necessary to manage pain. Physical pains and phantom pains are treated differently. Talk to your health care provider to find the most appropriate treatment plan for you.

**For more healthy tips, please contact POSI today.**