

# **Prosthetic Socks**

## **Wear and Care Instructions**

Prosthetic socks can be used to manage perspiration, cushion the residual limb, and adjust the fit of the socket to compensate for shrinking or swelling. It is very important for you to learn to manage your prosthetic socks correctly. There is a learning curve to properly adjusting your sock ply-it may be a frustrating process.

### **Ply and Sock Sizes**

Prosthetic socks are specially designed for wearing with a prosthesis. For optimal fit and comfort, wear the correct size and ply of socks.

- "Ply" tells you how thick a sock is. Socks come in a variety of thicknesses, such as 1-ply, 3-ply, and 5-ply. A 5-ply is thicker than a 3-ply and a 3-ply is thicker than a 1-ply.
- Keep track of your total sock ply. For example, a 3-ply and a 5-ply give a total of 8-ply. If you know your total ply, you can combine different ply socks that add up to your total.

For example, for a total of 5-ply, you can wear: five 1-plys OR two 1-ply and a 3-ply OR one 5-ply.

Your prosthetist will assist you in determining the correct sock ply you should wear with your prosthesis.

### **Sheaths**

In addition to prosthetic socks, some people also wear a prosthetic sheath next to their skin. This sheath helps wick perspiration away from the skin. It also protects the skin from blisters and abrasions. A sheath does not count as a "ply" of sock.

### **Wearing Instructions**

- When putting on your socks, you should put on one sock at a time beginning with your sheath (if you have one). The seam of your sheath should be placed on the back of your residual limb.
- Socks should be placed over your liner (if applicable). Make sure the locking pin is fully exposed, with no socks covering any part of the pin.
- Socks should be pulled on gently to eliminate any wrinkles.
- The seam of your socks should run side to side, never front to back. Sock seams should not cross over your shin bone. This will prevent rubbing and possible skin breakdown.

### **Shrinkage and Swelling**

After wearing your prosthesis for a period of time, it is normal for your residual limb to change in size. You will need to modify your sock ply to maintain the appropriate fit of your prosthesis. Your limb will shrink in the long term due to continued prosthesis use, but it may also

fluctuate over the course of the day. You may notice that your limb shrinks during a period of extended walking or exercise, or may swell after not wearing your shrinker or being out of your prosthesis. Changes may be caused by gaining/losing weight or changes in the weather, among others. Your prosthetist will determine when a new prosthesis is needed due to long term shrinkage, and short term changes may be managed with socks.

### **When to Add Socks**

If your leg begins to shrink, you must use socks to fill up the space left by the shrinkage. You may need to add a ply of sock if you feel one of the following warning signs:

If you are a Below-the-Knee (BK) Amputee:

- You may feel the socket (bar) pushing up under your knee cap.
- There may be a red mark on your knee cap from the prosthesis.
- You may feel the end of your residual limb hit the bottom of the socket, potentially with pain or blistering.
- The end of your residual limb may feel loose or it feels like it “bangs” back and forth in the bottom of the socket.
- The prosthesis may feel short.
- Your leg may slide into the prosthesis too far.

If you are an Above-the-Knee (AK) Amputee:

- You may feel pressure/burning in the groin area.
- You may feel the end of your residual limb hit the bottom of the socket.
- The prosthesis may feel short.

When you feel any of these warning signs, you should immediately stop what you are doing and put on another ply of sock. Add only one ply of sock at a time.

### **When to Subtract Socks**

Sometimes your residual limb may swell a little and you may need to wear fewer ply of socks. You know you need to remove a ply of sock when you feel one of the following warning signs:

If you are a Below-the-Knee (BK) Amputee:

- You may feel pressure from the “bar” in the socket on the shin of your leg.
- The bottom of your knee cap is well out of the socket.
- You may feel pain on bottom of your leg.
- There may be a red mark on the shin of your leg.
- The end of your residual limb is not touching the bottom of the socket.
- The prosthesis may feel tall.
- Your prosthesis does not slide on all the way.

If you are an Above-the-Knee (AK) Amputee:

- You may feel your “sit bone” sitting on the prosthesis.
- The end of your residual limb is not touching the bottom of the socket.
- The prosthesis may feel tall.

To make sure you are touching the bottom of your socket, use the "Powder Test."

1. Put a little baby/talcum powder in the bottom of your socket.
2. Put on your socks.
3. Put on your prosthesis and walk approximately 2-3 minutes.
4. Remove your prosthesis.
  - If the majority of the powder is stuck on the bottom of your socks, your residual limb has good contact inside the prosthesis.
  - If the majority of the powder remains in the bottom of the socket, the number of sock “ply” you are wearing is excessive. Remove one ply of sock and repeat powder test.

### **Half Socks**

Often you will simply add or subtract an entire sock to adjust the fit of the socket, but sometimes it will be necessary to use half socks (full length prosthetic socks that have been cut in half) to adjust the fit in only the top or bottom of the prosthesis. If the socket feels tight around the sides of your knee, and loose at the bottom, a half sock on the bottom half of your limb may be necessary.

### **Cleaning Instructions**

- Always put on clean socks and sheath each day.
- Follow the washing instructions according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
- You may also wash your socks by hand, which may reduce the opportunity for them to shrink in size. Always use cool water.
- Use a mild soap and rinse socks thoroughly. Soap residue may cause skin irritation.
- Lay your socks flat to air dry. Never dry your socks in the sun, as it will ruin the material.

If you have skin irritation or ongoing discomfort with the use of your prosthesis; **discontinue using it immediately** and contact Berke Prosthetics & Orthotics at (650) 365-5861. If you have any questions about the use of your socks, please contact the office.