

Use and Maintenance Instructions

For ARTech Custom Made Silicone Restorations

Feet, Partial Feet & Forefeet Prostheses

If the silicone prosthesis is properly maintained, it should last from two to five years, depending upon the wear habits of the patient and the type of prosthesis. For example, a frequently used foot prosthesis may not last as long as a finger prosthesis which is only worn occasionally. Just remember that silicone is a man-made material which can be damaged if abused, but can also be repaired.

When You Receive Your Prosthesis

If the prosthesis still has a slight solvent smell, don't worry. It will dissipate in a few days. When you first try it on (see "Putting on the Prosthesis" below), wear it for an hour or so, paying close attention to the way the extremity feels. If you experience slight pain or numbness, remove it for a while, then try again. Usually, the prosthesis can be worn for long periods of time immediately, but sometimes it takes a few days for your circulation to adjust to the new added pressures of the prosthesis socket. The silicone will gradually soften somewhat and conform to your residual extremity. Eventually, it should become very comfortable and almost like a part of you and can be worn all day. However, be sure to remove it before sleeping. If the prosthesis is still uncomfortable after a few days, it may require adjustment by the fabricating technician. In this case, return it to your prosthetist with a detailed description of the problem.

Putting on the Prosthesis

It is important for the extremity to be clean and dry before wearing the prosthesis. **Always dust the residual foot and the interior of the socket with foot powder, baby powder, etc. before putting it on. The powder will provide the necessary lubrication without making it too slippery when walking. Always use a shoe horn as you would when putting on a tight shoe. Never stretch the thin silicone material at the opening with your fingers. Usually, you should insert the end of the residual foot first and then, using the shoe horn, slide the heel into the socket.** However, with a very short residual foot, it may be easier to insert the heel first and use the shoe horn in the front.

When removing the prosthesis, slide it down past the heel, then slip it off. When the residual foot is short, it may be easier to slide it down in front first. Again, do not pull on the opening with your fingers.

General Precautions

Avoiding Rough Surfaces

Silicone is one of the most durable materials available, however, if the prosthesis is habitually rubbed against rough surfaces, the outer painted surface may wear off resulting in a color change. Although the worn areas can be repaired and touched-up by ARTech Laboratory, it is still an inconvenience as well as an additional expense.

Do not handle rough items or surfaces while wearing your silicone hand or finger prosthesis without first covering it with a glove or finger cot. If you wear a foot prosthesis, do not walk on rough surfaces without wearing shoes and/or socks. You may go swimming while wearing your silicone prosthesis, but avoid repeatedly rubbing it on the surfaces of the pool walls or floor.

Preventing Color Changes

Silicone is resistant to normal stains such as ball point pen and newspaper inks but **prolonged exposure to some unstable dyes can stain the prosthesis. For example, new leather shoes may cause staining of a silicone prosthesis. Some fabric dyes will also stain.** *We recommend washing anything that will come into contact with your foot several times before wearing.* Please refrain from rubbing your prosthesis against fabrics. With a silicone foot prosthesis, always wear socks or nylons inside a dyed leather shoe. If you wear new colored socks, wear a nylon or white sock under the colored sock. Do not store the prosthesis in an area which may allow it to have prolonged contact with unstable dyes, permanent inks, oils, or solvents. If you notice a stain which cannot be rubbed or washed off with a mild detergent and

soft brush, send the prosthesis to ARTech as soon as possible. With proper treatment, most stains can be eliminated or dramatically reduced, so don't panic!

Avoid exposing the prosthesis to tobacco smoke, as it may stain or yellow the prosthetic material. In addition the buildup of hydro carbons may make future repairs difficult since it will hamper the adherence of new paint to the older paint.

Normal outdoor wearing habits do not harm the silicone material, but prolonged exposure to the rays of the sun can bleach out any color pigments, including those in the prosthesis. Do not store the prosthesis in direct sunlight or wear it more than necessary for tanning, outdoor sports, etc.

Avoid directly exposing the prosthetic material to strong solvents such as benzene, xylene, or gasoline, which can cause fading and weakening of the prosthetic material. Other harsh chemicals such as industrial cleaning fluids or strong acids may also have adverse effects on the prosthesis. If the prosthesis is exposed to any such chemicals or solvents, wash it as soon as possible with warm water and mild soap or detergent, using a soft brush if available.

Swimming in normally treated pool water is no problem for an ARTech prosthesis, but it is advisable to thoroughly wash it with a mild soap solution and then rinse it in warm tap water after swimming.

Avoiding Accidents

Using a silicone prosthesis for performing everyday tasks can be very helpful, but there are a few precautions which should be observed. Here is a typical list:

1. Avoid prolonged contact with extremely hot appliances such as irons, soldering irons, blow torches, frying pans, barbeque grills, etc. The silicone material is highly resistant to high temperatures, but it can be scorched with prolonged contact.
2. Avoid cutting the material with razor knives or scissors.
3. Don't store the prosthesis in a pocket or purse next to ink pens or other items which may discolor the silicone.
4. Store the prosthesis in a dry, inconspicuous but safe place (like a bedside table drawer).
5. Keep the prosthesis out of the reach of small children or animals.
6. **Don't swim in the ocean with a silicone prosthesis. If it comes off, it's gone!**
7. Don't walk on the beach with a foot prosthesis unless you wear shoes.
8. Avoid getting super glue on the silicone material or acrylic nails. You may use rubber cement or stick-on pads to attach artificial fingernails.
9. If you have a small scratch in an acrylic nail, you may use an ultra-fine buffer to remove it. However, avoid rubbing the adjoining silicone with the buffer.

Cleaning Your Prosthesis

Regular washing with soap and water is a must. If the prosthesis becomes slightly discolored, it is usually dirt, dust, or oils which collect on the surface of the material and can easily be removed by washing with a soft bristled brush, mild soap (i.e. Ivory Liquid or Dawn dishwashing detergent), and warm water. If the prosthesis still has traces of oil on the outer surface, try gently wiping the surface with a soft cloth moistened with rubbing alcohol. **Caution: The acrylic nails of a foot prosthesis should NOT be cleaned with rubbing alcohol. Prolonged contact with alcohol can damage the acrylic material.**

If you wear your prosthesis frequently and for long periods of time (especially in hot weather), you may need to sanitize it periodically. Wash it thoroughly inside with mild soap and warm water to remove vaseline or foot powder. Dry it completely (Use a hair dryer if you wish). Dust the interior of the prosthesis with baking soda and seal the prosthesis in a large plastic bag overnight. In the morning, thoroughly rinse and dry it. If it still has a slightly offensive odor, use a soft cloth moistened with Listerine to wipe it down inside. After a few minutes, rinse it out, dry completely, then apply new foot powder as instructed above.

When **removing nail polish** from the nails of a hand or finger prosthesis, **always use non-acetone nail polish remover.**

When you need a repair

Silicone has been proven to be the best material available for cosmetic restoration prostheses. However, it is a man-made material which can be damaged by abuse or simply worn out by common use. Some patients make their prostheses last for years while others need a repair or replacement in a few months.

When you notice a tear or discoloration in the silicone material (or acrylic nail), return it to your prosthetist as soon as possible along with a complete description of the probable cause of the problem. He will, in turn, send it to ARTech with instructions to repair or replace the prosthesis as the situation requires. At ARTech, repairs are made and the prosthesis is returned as soon as possible. **Under no circumstances use any type “super glue” to repair the prosthesis. The chemicals will cause the silicone to crystalize and compound the problem, resulting in an increase of time and cost of repairs. Should a piece of the silicone tear off, please keep it and return it along with the prosthesis for repair. This will make it faster to repair and cost less than if we had to fill in the silicone and try to match the color.**