

Use and Maintenance Instructions For ARTech Custom Made Silicone Restorations

Hand, Toe or Finger Prosthesis

If the silicone prosthesis is properly maintained, it should last from two to five years, depending upon the lifestyle of the patient and the type of prosthesis. For example, a prosthesis frequently used for working in a factory, construction or gardening will not last as long as a prosthesis which is only worn occasionally for social functions. Just remember that silicone is a man-made material which can be damaged if abused, but can also be repaired. ARTech's prostheses are primarily designed for appearance restoration.

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, 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

The first step in wearing a silicone prosthesis is to wash and thoroughly dry your hands and skin where the prosthesis is to be placed. **When putting on a hand, finger or toe prosthesis, always lubricate all the interior surface with Vaseline or similar lubricant.** The Vaseline makes the interior surface slide easily over the skin, increases the suction in the socket for better retention, and eventually softens the material for a more comfortable fit. **Please be especially careful about getting Vaseline on the exterior of the prosthesis. Anything oily, even hand lotion, may cause the paint on future repairs not to adhere.**

Do not open the interior socket of the prosthesis by pulling the thin edges of the trimline (or opening). Instead, grasp the whole prosthesis on the outside of the socket and push it onto the injured extremity. While pushing it on, make the extremity as narrow as possible. For a finger or total hand prosthesis (one with no additional holes for residual fingers), it is helpful to partially collapse the socket with your hand or fingers to remove air inside the socket before pushing it on. To avoid accidentally getting Vaseline on the outside of the prosthesis, it may help to use a tissue or paper towel when grasping the outside of the prosthesis to push it on. With proper lubrication, and practice, even a tight fitting prosthesis will slip on easily.

When removing the prosthesis, it is sometimes necessary to break the suction in the socket by inserting a small blunt stick into the opening, flat against the skin. For a finger, a coffee stirrer works well and for a hand, a small art brush handle. Pull a hand or finger prosthesis off much the same way that you put it on. Grasp the outside of the socket area and gently remove it, breaking the suction if necessary. Do not pull it off too forcefully as it may cause bruising on the ends of the extremity or tears in the silicone. Do not remove a hand prosthesis by pulling on the fingers or the thin silicone material at the opening of the socket.

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, it is still an inconvenience as well as an additional expense and repairs are never "as good as new."

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. 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 or permanent inks can stain the prosthesis. For example, new leather gloves or sweaters may cause staining of a silicone prosthesis. Before wearing new leather gloves, first put on a latex or thin cloth glove over your prosthesis. 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, 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 dense tobacco smoke, as it may stain or yellow the prosthetic material. It may also affect future repairs since the hydro carbon build up may not allow paint to adhere to the old silicone. 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.
2. Avoid cutting the material with razor knives or scissors while doing kraft work.
3. Avoid cutting the material with kitchen utensils (especially potato peelers).
4. Don't use the fingers of a hand prosthesis to push open doors.
5. Don't store the prosthesis in a pocket or purse next to ink pens or other items which may discolor the silicone.
6. Store the prosthesis in a dry, inconspicuous but safe place (like a bedside table drawer).
7. Keep the prosthesis out of the reach of small children or animals.
8. **Don't swim in the ocean with a silicone prosthesis.** If it comes off, it's gone!.
9. **Avoid getting super glue on the silicone material or acrylic nails.** You may use rubber cement or stick-on pads to temporarily attach artificial fingernails.
10. The fingers of a hand prosthesis usually contain bendable wires which can be positioned for the most natural appearance or for the best function while performing daily tasks. When changing the position of the fingers, proceed slowly and carefully. The wires can be broken if they are bent too far and too often.
11. If you have a small scratch in an acrylic fingernail, you may use an ultra-fine buffer to remove it. However, avoid rubbing the adjoining silicone with the buffer.

Cleaning Your Prosthesis

It is extremely important that you clean your prosthesis regularly. 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), and warm water. If the prosthesis still has traces of oil (or Vaseline) on the outer surface, try gently wiping the surface with a soft cloth moistened with

rubbing alcohol. **Caution: The acrylic nails of a hand or finger 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 other lubricant. Dry it completely using a paper or cloth towel. 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 Vaseline 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

If 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. **Should a piece of the silicone be torn off, please return it with the rest of the prosthesis. This will make repairs faster and cost less. Under no circumstances use any type of “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.**