

# Breast prosthesis information



A prosthesis is offered to maintain symmetry after breast surgery. It can be a full prosthesis after a mastectomy, or a partial prosthesis after breast conserving surgery. Some ladies may choose not to have reconstruction of the breast or be uncertain about further surgery. Please discuss this with your breast care nurse who can advise you and arrange fitting of a prosthesis as necessary.

The aim of this leaflet is to inform you about:

- your fitting appointment
- how to care for your prosthesis
- how to get replacements in the future.

## **Your appointment**

We know that this can be a very sensitive time for you and we will respect your privacy and dignity at all times. We work closely with company representatives who run our prosthesis fitting clinics. They will discuss suitable bras with you, but if you would like to bring a selection of your own with you, please do so. Prostheses, like breasts, come in different shapes and sizes. Therefore, you will probably need to try several before you find one that looks natural and feels comfortable. You may prefer to wear a bra with a pocket in the cup to hold the prosthesis in place.

## **Care of your prosthesis**

You should wash your prosthesis with warm soapy water and pat it dry every time you wear it, even if you wear a bra with a pocket. When you are not wearing your prosthesis keep it in its box; this will help to keep it in shape and stop it getting damaged. The box is also your guarantee, please keep it in case you need to return the prosthesis.

Prostheses are made of silicone gel and have a protective outer skin. Each one costs between £120 and £160. If the protective skin gets punctured or damaged the prosthesis cannot be repaired. Punctures may be caused by:

- pins
- needles
- brooches

- pets claws (dogs and cats)
- thorns (be careful in the garden or wear a softie).

If it splits apply a waterproof plaster and contact the mermaid centre for an appointment.

**Remember companies will no longer automatically replace damaged prostheses, even if they are still under guarantee.**

## **Replacement prosthesis**

If you would like a replacement prosthesis, please ring the breast care department on 01872 252880 to arrange an appointment.

Most prostheses are guaranteed for two or three years, but will often last longer. If your prosthesis gets damaged while it is under guarantee, please contact the breast care department for an appointment. Please bring your prosthesis and its cardboard box, so that we can return it to the manufacturer. If the damage is due to a manufacturing fault they will replace it free of charge. We cannot automatically replace a well fitting, damaged prosthesis that is under guarantee, or provide a spare prosthesis. However, if you would like to buy a spare prosthesis, we can help you with fitting and ordering.

## **South West Peninsula Network - Guidelines for Prosthetic Service**

Every patient treated under the NHS will be given a breast prosthesis of their size and shape approximately six weeks after surgery. At the first appointment, care and life of the prosthesis is explained. Please read the manufacturers instructions carefully. If you gain or lose weight your prosthesis will be exchanged.

If a prosthesis is in good condition and still meets your requirements it is not replaced routinely. If a prosthesis is returned in poor condition under two years of issue, and is not due to a manufacturing fault, you will be given a replacement. However, if this occurs a second time you will be informed that you may have to pay for another one.

If you choose to have private medical care your first prosthesis is either claimed for on your insurance plan, or purchased privately.

## Contact prosthesis

These are not usually offered as a first prosthesis as they are not suitable to wear during chemotherapy or for approximately nine months after radiotherapy treatment. However, if you only need surgery, they can be fitted to a well healed wound two to three months after your operation. These prostheses are not suitable to wear without a bra.

An information leaflet can be sent to you if you are considering a contact prosthesis, or options can be discussed at the prosthesis clinic. The emphasis is placed on strict skin care and daily cleansing of the prosthesis. There is a small cost implication to buy skin toner, special cleaning solution and adhesive pads. This is available directly from the company.

You must understand that the 'warranty' does not cover the adhesive part of the prosthesis, after the first year. Therefore if the adhesive does fail the prosthesis may need to be used as an ordinary prosthesis for the remainder of the two years.

If you have any further questions please contact a breast care nurse on 01872 252880.

Please use this space to note any questions you may have.

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

