

Patient information factsheet

Your breast prosthesis

We have given you this factsheet because you have had breast surgery and have been offered a breast prosthesis. It explains what a breast prosthesis is, how to care for your prosthesis and when to replace your prosthesis. We hope it helps to answer some of your questions. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is a breast prosthesis?

A breast prosthesis is an artificial breast form that sits inside your bra to replace the shape of all or part of your breast that has been surgically removed. 'Prostheses' is the word for more than one prosthesis.

Your first prosthesis

After your mastectomy (a surgical procedure to remove all of a breast) or wide local excision (a surgical procedure to remove part of a breast), we will give you your first breast prosthesis free of charge. Wearing a well-fitted prosthesis will help with your posture and body balance, especially if you had a full mastectomy.

Your breast care nurse will take every care to ensure a good fit during your breast prosthesis fitting appointment. However, it may take a week or so of wearing your prosthesis to decide whether it feels right in terms of size, shape, and comfort.

Exchanging your prosthesis

If you feel the prosthesis we have given you is not suitable, you may exchange it **within two weeks** of receiving it for a different size or style. To arrange an exchange, contact us as soon as possible using the details at the end of this factsheet.

You must return the original prosthesis along with the box it came in to receive a replacement.

Caring for your prosthesis

With proper care, most silicone breast prostheses last around two to three years before needing to be replaced. We have included some useful tips below to help ensure your prosthesis lasts a long time and remains comfortable.

Cleaning

- Wash your prosthesis daily with lukewarm water and a mild, non-perfumed soap.
- Gently pat your prosthesis dry with a soft towel (do not wring, squeeze, or rub it harshly).

Things to avoid

- Heat (for example, hot water, direct sunlight, or heating appliances, such as a hair dryer)
- Sharp objects (for example, pins or fingernails) that may damage the surface of the prosthesis
- Harsh detergents, alcohol-based products or abrasive (rough textured) cloths

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Storage

- Always store your prosthesis in the original box it came in when not in use to help it keep its shape.
- Keep your prosthesis in a cool, dry place.

Bra use

- Always wear your prosthesis in a well-fitting bra with a pocket for best support.
- Avoid wearing underwired bras (unless we have advised you to).

Swimming

- If you wish to swim, ask us about a **swim prosthesis**. Regular silicone prostheses are not always suitable for use in chlorinated or salt water.

Replacement prostheses

We can no longer issue replacement breast prostheses without a **new referral** from your general practitioner (GP). Please ask your GP to complete an online referral to the breast care nursing team for a replacement.

When to replace your prosthesis

You may need a new prosthesis if:

- it becomes damaged or worn
- you have a significant weight change
- you are fitted with a new bra and your current prosthesis no longer fits well.

Please note that we can't issue a new prosthesis if your current one is still in good condition and fits well.

Contact us

Adjusting to your breast prosthesis can take time (emotionally as well as physically). If you need support or have any questions or concerns, speak to your breast care nurse or contact us.

Breast care nursing team

Telephone: **023 8120 3753** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

Useful links

www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/breast-cancer/treatment/surgery/after-surgery/false-breast-shape

www.breastcancernow.org/about-breast-cancer/life-after-treatment/your-body-after-breast-cancer-treatment/breast-prosthesis

www.breastcancernow.org/about-breast-cancer/life-after-treatment/your-body-after-breast-cancer-treatment/breast-prosthesis/types-of-breast-prosthesis

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

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