Preparing for Prosthesis after Amputation

To help prepare you for a prosthesis, there are some things that can help make your limb less sensitive to touch and pressure. These include:

- Massage
- Tapping
- Desensitization
- Scar massage

Some people find these also help lesson phantom pain.

Be sure to check with your doctor or therapist before starting these techniques to prevent injury. These can be done on an arm or leg site.

**Massage**

You can do massage with your compression dressing off or on.

- Using one or both hands, gently squeeze and release to massage your limb. At first be cautious around your suture line or scar.
- Start at your suture line and massage up and around your entire limb.
- **Massage at least 5 minutes and do the massage 3 to 4 times each day.** You can do it more often if it helps ease phantom pain.
- After your sutures are removed and the site has healed, you can increase the pressure when you squeeze to massage the deeper muscles.

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Learn more about your health care.
Tapping

**Tapping should be done for 1 to 2 minutes, 3 to 4 times each day.** If it helps phantom pain, you can do it more often.

At first, tapping can be done with the compression dressing on or off while the sutures are in place.

- Use the soft, padded parts of your fingers, not your finger nails.
- Gently tap, using the pads of your fingers, over the suture line.

After the suture line is healed, you can increase the pressure. You can go from tapping to gently slapping the scar site.

- Use your fingers from one or both hands and tap or gently slap the end of your limb to make you less sensitive to touch and pressure.

Desensitization

This is done to help make your limb less sensitive so you can tolerate touch against your limb. You will start with soft cotton and move to more rough materials. Your compression dressing must be off to do this technique.

**You should do this for 2 to 3 minutes, two times each day.**

- Hold a cotton ball in your hand and gently rub the cotton ball on the skin of your limb. Move the cotton ball in circles and rub your entire limb.
- When you are able, use a rougher material, like a paper towel, instead of the cotton ball.
- As you are able, use a terry cloth towel or washcloth, instead of the paper towel.
- Keep doing this until you are able to tolerate the gentle rubbing of the terry cloth.
Scar Massage

This is done to keep your scar from getting stiff and tight. If the scar attaches to the tissue, it can cause more pain and be a site for blisters when you wear the prosthesis. Scar massage will keep the scar loose and less thick.

Do this one time each day when you bathe.

- Before your suture line heals, you will not be pressing on the scar line. You will move the skin around the bone at the end of your limb.
  - It is best to do this when your compression dressing is off.
  - Place 2 of your fingertips on the skin over the bony end of your limb.
  - Press firmly and move your fingers in circles across the bone. Keep making circles until you have massaged all of the skin around the end of your limb.

- After your suture line has healed, place your fingers on the scar line and move in circles across your scar. Press in gently along the scar to move the skin over the tissue lying underneath.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.