

Preparatory vs Definitive Upper Limb Prosthesis

You still start with a preparatory prosthesis, and then later be provided the definitive prosthesis.

PREPARATORY PROSTHESIS

A preparatory prosthesis is a temporary prosthesis that is used for several weeks or months until your limb has stabilized. First, your prosthetist will make a check or “test” socket, which is a clear plastic mold of your residual limb.

Your prosthetist will modify the test socket to address any fitting issues and achieve a comfortable and proper fit. The test socket will be used to fabricate your preparatory prosthesis. The preparatory prosthesis is designed to be worn while your residual limb continues to heal and mature in size and shape. During this time, expect adjustments to be made to maintain fit as your limb adjusts and changes.

Your limb may change in size due to:

- **Swelling:** It is normal and generally reduces over several weeks with the help of compressive dressings and shrinkers.
- **Muscle Atrophy:** Muscles in the residual limb will no longer function as they did, so they generally become smaller from lack of use. This is normal and will allow you to have better control of the prosthetic socket that joins your residual limb to the prosthesis.



DEFINITIVE PROSTHESIS

Once your residual limb stabilizes and matures, you will be ready for your definitive prosthesis. Your definitive prosthesis may have:

- A more advanced design
- Features for special tasks or higher activity levels
- Opportunities to design the appearance and functionality more for your lifestyle

Your prosthetist will work with you to identify the components and technology most appropriate for your activity level, functional needs, and lifestyle goals. Receiving your definitive prosthesis is a similar process to your preparatory prosthesis.



For more information, scan the code
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* Hanger Clinic: Upper Limb Prosthetic Specialty Network

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