

Vascutek Patient Education

Vascular Anatomy & Vascular Surgery Frequently Asked Questions



This section has been compiled by a Consultant Vascular Surgeon to provide helpful background information to patients who receive a vascular prosthesis. It is intended to supplement information given by the patient's own medical/surgical team and is not a replacement for such information.

Please consult your General Practitioner or Surgeon if anything is puzzling you.

How can I be sure my prosthesis is working properly?

After your prosthesis has been implanted, symptoms that you suffered prior to surgery will have reduced, and in many cases, will have disappeared altogether. Providing these symptoms and signs do not return or worsen, it can be safely assumed that the prosthesis is working satisfactorily.

How will my vascular system be affected if my vascular prosthesis should stop functioning?

The organ or tissue served by the prosthesis will gradually or suddenly receive less blood and typical symptoms will return. For example, severe pain on walking, or coldness of a foot especially in bed at night.

Can vascular prostheses be affected by outside energy sources like motors, microwave ovens, airport security checks, sun beds etc?

No.

Will my activities be restricted because of my prosthesis?

Only your doctor can advise you of your individual limitations. He has knowledge of your general condition and the position of your prosthesis. It is very common, however, for patients to return to a completely normal and active life after implantation of a vascular prosthesis. However, for prostheses inserted in the legs, your doctor may well recommend a level of restriction to certain activities like golf, swimming or gardening until the prosthesis is fully integrated within the vascular system.

Can I smoke?

You should not smoke. Smoking has been shown to affect the long-term success of vascular prostheses as well as the condition of your own arteries.

How about restriction on my sexual activity?

Unless your doctor advises you otherwise, resume and enjoy your usual sexual activity.

Can I still drive a car?

In most cases, yes. Of course you must take the advice of your doctor.

How will my diet be affected?

Your doctor may instruct you to avoid certain foods or add others to your diet. In general, you should keep your weight to the normal range for your age and reduce your intake of animal fat. Good nutrition, like good physical conditioning and some medicines, will help your vascular system function properly.

What about travelling?

Once the prosthesis has become integrated within the vascular system, travel should be unrestricted. When travelling or sitting for prolonged periods of time, if a leg prosthesis has been inserted, it is good practice to sit reclined with the legs outstretched and to have some exercise during the journey. However, your doctor is the only one able to give you final advice.

Is it necessary for me to take drugs or medication to maintain the prosthesis?

Frequently, your doctor will put you on tablets designed to help the function of your prosthesis. This is nothing to worry about but it is important that you follow your doctor's instructions.

If I have any infection or have any surgical procedure should I take any special precaution?

If you have any significant skin infection or have a minor operative procedure e.g. dental treatment, or cystoscopy or examination of the bowel then you should always consult your doctor regarding the advisability of taking an antibiotic. Similar advice should be sought if you have a bout of severe gastroenteritis.

How often does my vascular prosthesis require replacement?

Your vascular prosthesis has been designed to last and remain functional for years. However, some bypasses will block. If this happens you may need a new bypass, depending on your particular symptoms.

There is a small risk of any prosthesis becoming infected. When it is placed in your body, the prosthesis is guaranteed to be 100% sterile and free of all infective agents. Operations are carried out under the strictest sterile conditions possible and you will have been given antibiotics at the time of the operation to reduce the risk of infection further. On very rare occasions, infection can nevertheless be carried onto the prosthesis from your skin or from the air of the operating theatre. This may not have any effect but, if the prosthesis becomes infected, it often needs to be removed.

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