

You may have lost your eye or the area around it (called the orbit) from cancer surgery or an injury. This factsheet tells about getting an eye prosthesis. A prosthesis is a device made to replace a missing human body part.

How can an eye prosthesis help me?

For many patients, plastic surgery to reconstruct the eye area is not an option. A prosthetic costs much less than surgery, and it looks almost the same as your real eye.

In addition to giving the appearance of the eye, the prosthesis restores lost functions:

- Keeps your mucous membranes from drying, cracking, and bleeding
- May help with speech clarity and breathing
- Prevents eyeglass fogging from your breath
- Protects your airway

What keeps the prosthesis in place?

Many patients choose to use glue. It takes about 5 minutes each day to put the prosthesis in place. It stays secure all day, even during swimming or other sports.

Some people use clips, balls, or magnets that attach to screws placed in the bone. These methods may be more convenient, but they may not be as secure as with glue.

If you choose clips, balls, or magnets, you will need surgery to put the screws in place. We will talk with you about this in your first appointment. We can help you find the right surgeon.

You can find instructions for using your prosthesis in these factsheets:

Using and Caring for Your Facial Prosthesis: Glued

Using and Caring for Your Facial Prosthesis: Implanted

Will my insurance cover the costs?

Nearly all insurance plans will cover the cost of a prosthesis. Many plans consider our service as in-network. If your plan's network has no prosthesis provider, we can often qualify as in-network.

What is the process for making my prosthesis?

Each prosthesis is a unique, custom design made to fit the person wearing it. You come in for three or four visits:

1. We take impressions of both sides of your face so we can make the basic shape for your prosthesis. We also start painting the eye part of the prosthesis. It takes 60–90 minutes.
2. We fine-tune the basic shape to fit and look right. Sometimes this needs two visits. Each takes about 2 hours.
3. We color the prosthesis to match your skin. This takes 1–2 hours.

Usually, the appointments are a few days apart. The prosthesis is ready in about 2–3 weeks. For patients who travel long distances, we can speed up the process to complete the prosthesis in 4–5 days.

What is my prosthesis made of?

We use silicone and polyurethane rubber. The eye part is made of hard plastic. These materials are safe for use in medical products. They do not cause allergic reactions.

How long will my prosthesis last?

Your prosthesis should last several years with daily wear and proper care.

The original cost includes changes or repairs within 90 days of delivery. We also have a free 2-year repair or replace guarantee.

Insurance will often cover repairs, changes, or replacement from accidental damage.

Learn more at our website:
huntsmancancer.org/prosthetics
Phone: 801-585-0140
Email: paul.tanner@hci.utah.edu