

Learning that you are facing an amputation can be a daunting prospect. Coming to terms with the thought of surgery is not always easy and can lead to many questions.

There are a number of different healthcare staff you can meet before your amputation to gain information. Options will vary depending on where you live.

Some recommendations prior to surgery may include:

- **Speaking to a doctor** about your recovery process, your treatment care plan and what may happen after surgery.
- **Speaking to a prosthetist or a physiotherapist** about what level of mobility is realistically possible for you to achieve after amputation.
- **Requesting to meet an amputee** (a Peer Support Service volunteer via www.peersupport.nz).
- **Visiting a rehabilitation centre** to find out what services they provide. They will also be able to advise on what you can do in the lead up to your operation to ensure you are as fit as possible both physically, and emotionally.

If your treatment care plan is likely to include sending you for rehabilitation after your surgery, ask about the programmes and services that the rehabilitation facility have in place.

If you are not going to be admitted to a rehabilitation facility, find out where you will be going and what supports will be available for you.

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Artificial Limb Service



Produced with support from Limbs 4 Life Inc.

FACT SHEET

Becoming an amputee



Pre-amputation and the decision to amputate

To help with your preparation for your amputation and what happens afterwards, try to access as much information as you need so that you can understand what lies ahead.

- Make a list and write down any questions or concerns you have.**
- Arrange a time to **discuss these with your doctor or healthcare provider.**
- It can sometimes be helpful to take whānau or a friend to appointments for support.**
 - They may be able to help you by taking notes as it is very likely you will not take in all of the information you are given.

Whether your amputation is due to disease, infection, cancer or trauma, the opportunity to save a limb is not always possible.

For some people, the choice to undergo an amputation is completely out of their hands.

At this time, people usually have questions. These questions may include:

- How will I manage day to day tasks?
- How will I look after myself?
- Will I be able to regain my independence?
- Will a prosthesis give me quality of life?
- Will I be able to do the things I used to do?
- Will I still experience pain?
- How different will my life become?

Ask as many questions and access as much information as you can.

The more equipped you are with information, the more confidence you will have over decisions in your future.

Becoming an amputee and adjusting to limb loss

Becoming an amputee is a life changing experience for each individual. As you learn new ways of doing things you already do or try some different things, there are many people who can offer support to you.

An amputation is a significant change to your body and your life. **Everyone reacts differently to the loss of a limb/s and it is completely normal to feel strong emotions.** Limb loss can leave you feeling anxious, vulnerable and uncertain about the future. Some people grieve for their loss. You may feel scared, angry, frustrated or sad.

Working through your feelings may take time but it is important to **remember that your ability to adapt to these changes will become easier over time.** Some common difficulties that you may experience include:

- The ability to complete everyday tasks
- A change to your level of independence
- A difference in your mobility
- Concerns with your body image / sexuality
- General everyday changes to your lifestyle

Remember support is available, you don't have to go through this experience alone.



Make sure you ask for assistance if you need it, whether that is at the beginning of your journey, several months later or years down the track.

Emotional health and wellbeing

Your emotional health and mental wellbeing are equally as important as your physical health. There are a number of options for support available to you:

- Get involved with the Peer Support Service** (www.peersupport.nz).
 - Being with others who share a similar experience can help to reduce feelings of isolation.
 - Peer volunteers are likely to have some understanding of how you may be feeling and may help you to adjust to changes in your day to day life.
- Join a local support group.**
 - Amputee support groups provide a friendly and comfortable environment to share experiences with one another.
- If you don't wish to meet with a peer face to face or over the phone, **take part in an online discussion group.**
 - Online groups can provide connections to the wider community.
- Seek professional help.**
 - You may like to speak to a trained counsellor to help you deal with your emotions. Your doctor can assist you with a care plan or refer you to a professional.
- Talk to the people in your life** about how you are feeling.

Stay connected to your friends.

Share your thoughts with others as this will help you deal with the physical and emotional changes of how your body looks and feels.



For more helpful resources, please visit our website: www.pw.co.nz/resources