Going home following a stay in hospital can be a relief, however you need to think about what needs to be done to make your home as safe and as easy to get around as possible, and to reduce the risk of falls.

This fact sheet looks at what you need to consider prior to going home and the things that you will need to help you access, live and function independently at home.

What is an assistive device?

An assistive device is the name given to equipment which aids your ability to do things such as wheelchairs, walking aids and shower chairs.

What is a structural modification?

Structural modifications refer to parts of your home which require changes such as; changes to doors and walls in your home and/or the addition of rails, ramps or both.

Building standards need to be met when home modifications are made so it is important you seek the correct assistance. If you require a structural modification to your home you should be assessed by an Occupational Therapist to assist with this process, including advice regarding what is needed and applying for funding. Processing funding applications can take a long time.

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Amputees Federation of New Zealand Incorporated

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FACT SHEET

Returning home following a lower limb amputation

What to consider after a lower limb amputation

Consider using assistive devices to help you pick things off the floor, placed up high or items that are difficult to reach.

If you have stairs, both inside and outside the house, you may need alternative access. You may need to consider having a ramp or stair lift put in place (again this should be assessed by an Occupational Therapist).

There are lots of places where a hand rail on the wall can be added to make things safer for you – for example in the bathroom and near any stairs.

Examine whether you are able to sit and get up from your chairs. If you have difficulty, chairs may need to be adjusted or replaced.

Check whether you wheelchair easily turns around in your home.

You may need to consider whether lighting needs to be added or switches moved to make it easier and safer for you when it's dark, or consider

in-door sensor lights.

Bathroom considerations

The bathroom can be a high risk place because the floor can be wet and slippery which means it is easy to fall and hurt yourself.

Consider the amount of room you need to turn a wheelchair so that you can safely transfer to the toilet, bath or shower.

Consider how you will sit or stand in the bath or shower to wash. Many people use a shower chair or bath board to sit on in order to be safe. A hand held shower is also a good way to make washing easy.

Getting on to a shower chair can be hard if there is a lip on the ground for a shower screen. It that is the case, the lip could be removed and a curtain installed to make it easier and safer for you.

It can be assessed in the hospital whether or not you require assistance with activities of daily living such as washing, dressing and toileting. Home supports can be provided if required.

Consider the height of benches and whether you can reach them, particularly if you are using a wheelchair. If there is somewhere safe to stand with support while doing tasks e.g. washing dishes or preparing dinner, this can be helpful.

TIP
There are many products that can help you to live independently