



Fact Sheet #12

How to prevent falls following an amputation



Limbs 4 Life™
Empowering Amputees

What is fall prevention?

Fall prevention involves an individual assessment usually completed by a healthcare provider to determine what different actions will help you as an individual to reduce the number of accidental falls in your home and local community.

This Fact Sheet provides you with tips and ideas about preventing falls.

What can cause falls?

In the early stages following amputation your brain is still adjusting to the fact that you don't have a limb to put down on the ground. As you learn to move and regain your balance, falls can happen. Other factors that make you prone to a fall can include:

- The feeling or sensation that your amputated limb is still there also known as phantom sensation.
- Easily losing your balance when you are reaching forward or leaning down to put on your shoe.
- If you get up too quickly after sitting or lying down.
- Forgetting to put the brakes on your wheelchair, and your chair moves out from underneath you.
- Loss of concentration getting into, or out of the shower.
- Using a walking stick on a slippery or wet surface.

Who can help you to prevent falls?

Your Physiotherapist can assist you to develop skills which will help you to prevent falls. Nursing and other team members can help you practice safe ways to transfer and reach items.

These skills can include:

- Transferring from the bed to a wheelchair
- Transferring from your wheelchair to a shower chair
- Transferring from your wheelchair to different chairs or the car
- Using a pickup stick to reach items from the floor or items which are above your head

If you are unsure if you can reach an item, not feeling well or confident with your balance, seek help from someone who can assist you.

What happens if you do have a fall?

Like anyone that falls over you will want to get back up again. Doing this as an amputee can sometimes be more challenging. You may need to learn some new skills and techniques which will help you to get back up, if you have a fall.

Speak to your Physiotherapist about floor recovery techniques. They can provide you with instructions about how to get up safely, without hurting or damaging other parts of your body. They will show you the correct way to recover from a fall.

Remember when you have a fall it will most likely give you a fright. Instead of trying to get up in a hurry, take a moment to catch your breath, think about how you can get up safely and what you need to do. Plan your recovery in your mind before you actually try to do it.

How can I prevent falls at home?

There are a number of things that you can do to help you prevent falls in your home.

Modifications or equipment including:

- Grip bars in the wet areas: like the bathroom
- A non-slip mat in the bath or shower
- An appropriate over the toilet frame
- Hand rails on all steps and ramps

There are a few simple changes that you can make in your home to make it safer for you to move around. These include:

- Removing mats or rugs from the floor
- Make sure that there are no cords or extension leads in areas where you walk
- Rearrange furniture so that you have enough room to safely move around
- Wipe up any spills immediately
- Leave a light on at night

If you are feeling use an assistive device to give you support. These include:

- Walking frame.
- A walking stick or sticks.
- A crutch or crutches.
- A wheelchair.