

# Act Fast:

## Planning for Amputation

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Losing a limb is a significant change, and it's natural to feel uncertain about what's ahead. Careful planning can help make the process smoother and ensure you have the right support in place. This guide provides key considerations before your hospital stay, during your time in the city, and when planning your return home.

### Planning Your Hospital Stay

Preparing ahead of time can help reduce stress and ensure that everything is in place for your surgery and recovery.

### Understanding Your Procedure

It's important to understand your surgery so you can feel more prepared and confident. Every amputation is different, depending on the reason for it, where the limb is removed, and your overall health. Talking to your doctor and amputee nurse about your surgery will help you know what to expect and how to plan for your recovery, so you feel ready for the next steps.



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### Planning Your Hospital Stay

You may want to ask questions such as:

- How long will the surgery take?
- How much of my limb will be removed?
- Will I need to stop taking any medications before the procedure?
- What kind of anaesthesia will I receive?
- What are the risks involved?
- Do I have any other options other than amputation?
- Am I a candidate for a prosthetic limb?
- What can I expect in the first few days after surgery?
- How long will I be in hospital for?
- How soon can I start rehabilitation, and what will it involve?
- How will my pain be managed after surgery?
- When can my family come and see me after surgery?
- When will I get home?
- What cultural support is available to me whilst in hospital?
- What will happen to my limb after it's been amputated?
- Can I talk to someone who has had the same thing happen to them?
- Will I need to see a counsellor after surgery?
- Do I need a carer after surgery?
- Is there a chance that the same thing could happen to my other leg or arms?

Understanding the type of amputation you will have and how it may affect your mobility and daily life will help you start preparing for any adjustments you may need.

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### Mental and Emotional Preparation

Amputation isn't just a physical change—it can bring up strong emotions. You may feel grief, fear, or uncertainty, and that's completely normal.

There are a number of people you can reach out to for support.

- Speak to a counsellor or an Elder who can help you work through your feelings and help you to make a plan.
- Talk to loved ones so they know what you're going through and how they can best support you.
- Connect to a peer support group which includes others who have been through a similar journey.

### Responsibilities at home

In our families and communities, we often take on many important responsibilities, such as caring for children or looking after Elders. It's important to think about who can help with these tasks while you are in the hospital and during your recovery.

Your wellbeing should be the top priority, and making these arrangements before your surgery can help ease your mind and take some of the burden off your shoulders.

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### Financial Support

If you receive payments from Centrelink, it is important to understand the impacts a hospital stay may have on reporting requirements. If you need financial assistance, it's important to explore the different support options available to you. These could include:

- Jobseeker payment
- Disability Support Pension (DSP)
- Health care card
- National Disability insurance scheme
- My Aged Care

For more information, visit [servicesaustralia.gov.au](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au) or speak with a community service provider who can guide you through the process.

### Planning your recovery

If your amputation is taking place in a city hospital, it can be hard to be away from home and familiar surroundings. However, there are many support services available to help make your hospital stay comfortable and ensure you have the care you need.

Every hospital has different services, so ask what's available before your stay.



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### Cultural Support

Many hospitals have dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing Hubs or units. These hubs offer cultural support, assistance with navigating the hospital system, and connections to community services. The Aboriginal health workers and liaison officers can advocate for your needs, provide emotional support, and help ensure you feel comfortable during your hospital stay.

If possible, having a trusted family member or friend with you can provide emotional support, help with decision-making, and make it easier to communicate with your healthcare team.

Some hospitals also offer accommodation for family members who need to stay nearby while you're recovering. Speak to your healthcare team, Aboriginal health worker or social worker about what accommodation options may be available.



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### Recovery and Rehabilitation

In hospital, a dedicated team of healthcare professionals will support your recovery.

This team may include:

- Specialist doctors
- Surgeons
- Amputee nurses
- Physiotherapists
- Orthotist and prosthetists
- Occupational therapists
- Podiatrists
- Aboriginal health workers or liaison officer

Recovering from an amputation involves more than just healing from surgery—it's about regaining your independence and adapting to a new way of life.

Many city hospitals are linked to rehabilitation centres where you can get therapy to help you regain strength, mobility, and independence. These centres may be in the city, or in regional areas.

Once you have completed your initial rehabilitation, you may be referred to a local rehabilitation service to help you regain independence, improve safety when moving, and manage everyday activities like washing, dressing, and using a wheelchair.

Once you have completed your initial rehabilitation, you will have the opportunity to discuss with your rehabilitation team if prosthetic use is suitable for you. Prosthetic rehabilitation may occur in a different location to your initial rehabilitation. Remember it's ok to ask questions along the way.

It's important to stay informed about your treatment and recovery while you're in the hospital. The more you know about your care, the more confident and in control you'll feel.

Your Healthcare Team will help you to book follow-up appointments before leaving hospital.



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### Temporary Accommodation

If you live in a remote community, you may need to consider temporary accommodation closer to rehabilitation services before heading home to ensure you receive the care and therapy needed to support your recovery.

These may include hospital-run transition units, rehabilitation centres, or supported accommodation services that cater to people recovering from surgery.

Some facilities also provide access to Aboriginal health workers or cultural support services to ensure you feel comfortable and connected to community while away from home.

Speak to your healthcare team about the options which would best suit you.

### Peer Support Groups

Going through an amputation is a life-changing experience, and while medical teams provide essential care, sometimes the most valuable support comes from people who have been through it themselves.

Peer support groups connect you with others who have experienced amputation, providing a space to share stories, ask questions, and learn from those who understand what you're going through.

If you're interested in connecting with a peer support group, speak to your healthcare team or an Aboriginal health worker who can help you find a group that suits your needs.

You can also organise to speak with someone yourself by contacting Limbs 4 Life directly.



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### How can I find out more?

#### WellMob

<https://wellmob.org.au/>

Social, emotional and cultural wellbeing online resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

#### Limbs4life

[www.limbs4life.org.au/](http://www.limbs4life.org.au/)

Providing support to amputees, their families and care givers.

#### 13Yarn

13 92 76 / [www.13yarn.org.au/](http://www.13yarn.org.au/)

National support line for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in crisis.

#### Services Australia

[servicesaustralia.gov.au](http://servicesaustralia.gov.au)

Delivers government payments and services.

#### Government Accommodation

<https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/housing/housing-for-aboriginal-people/travelling-to-services>

Safe, secure and culturally appropriate transitional accommodation centres for Aboriginal people who are visiting metropolitan centres from across borders or a remote community to access medical services.

#### Preventative Health SA

<https://www.preventivehealth.sa.gov.au/healthy-living/aboriginal-health-wellbeing/services-support-for-aboriginal-people>

Services and support networks that are culturally appropriate and respectful that are available to the South Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The websites above may change over time, ask your health care team for suggestions if you need support.

We recognise First Nations peoples' cultural, spiritual, physical and emotional connection with their land. We honour and pay our respects to First Nations Elders, both past and present. We acknowledge and thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who shared their stories and expertise to codevelop these resources.



To view the videos that support this booklet, please scan this qr code or visit the Limbs 4 Life website.

<https://www.limbs4life.org.au/aboriginal-resources>

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