

Recover Strong:

Your Amputation Journey

Your Amputation Journey - What to Expect?

Undergoing an amputation is a major life event that requires understanding and support. It is important to know what to expect during your recovery, the roles of your medical team, the importance of self-advocacy, the rehabilitation process, and the Aboriginal support services available to you and your family.

While the amputation journey can be challenging, with the right support and resources, you can lead a fulfilling and independent life.

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Everyone's journey after an amputation is different, but typically follow these five stages. It is important to remember that at every stage, you can also ask to have an Aboriginal Liaison Officer or Aboriginal health worker with you for support.

Before Your Operation

Before your surgery, your healthcare team will check your overall health to make sure you're ready for the procedure and that there's nothing that could affect your recovery. You'll work with doctors and therapists to set clear goals and understand what will happen during your recovery.

Surgery Day

Prior to your surgery, you will check into the hospital and get ready for the operation. The surgical team will remove the affected limb while doing their best to keep as much of your limb and function as possible. After the surgery, you'll be closely monitored as you begin healing.

In-Hospital Care

After the surgery, you'll stay in the hospital where a team of surgeons, nurses, allied health professionals and Aboriginal health workers will help you heal. This time is all about resting and healing, but it is important to participate in the decisions about you, so you are ready for the next steps in your recovery.

Rehabilitation

Once your wound has healed, rehabilitation will help you regain independence. This could include walking, general mobility and navigating everyday activities like dressing, cooking, and personal care.

Your rehabilitation team may include rehab doctors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and prosthetists. Depending on your situation, you may return home or stay at a rehabilitation centre near the hospital.

Long-Term Support

Getting used to life after an amputation takes time. You will have regular check-ups with your healthcare team to check on your progress and fix any problems. It's important to know you are not alone and there's support to help you along the way. Staying connected with your support networks and staying informed will help you to recover strong.

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Your Clinical Teams and Their Roles

Throughout your journey, a supportive healthcare team will work together to help you through each stage of your recovery. Each person plays a special role in helping you heal, to get back on your feet, and adjust to life after amputation.

- **Surgeons:** Perform the amputation surgery and manage your initial recovery, ensuring the best outcome for healing.
- **Nurses:** Provide daily care, monitor your healing, and manage any pain you may experience, helping you feel as comfortable as possible. Specialist amputee nurses will also be available to guide you on your journey.
- **Physiotherapists:** Work with you to regain your strength and mobility. If you're getting a prosthesis, they'll also help you learn how to use it effectively.
- **Occupational therapists:** Help you adapt to daily tasks and recommend tools or devices to make everyday life easier and more manageable.
- **Prosthetists:** Design and fit prosthetic limbs that suit your needs and lifestyle, and they'll help maintain your prosthesis over time.
- **Podiatrists:** Help you to look after your other limb. They can assist with footcare, provide footwear advice, and manufacture an orthotic for your foot.
- **Rehabilitation consultant (doctor):** will work with you and the bigger health care team to make sure all your health and medical needs are looked after.
- **Aboriginal health workers and liaison officers:** Make sure your care is culturally sensitive and appropriate, and they connect you with local community support and resources.

Each healthcare team is made of a different mix of specialists to ensure you get the right support at every step of your recovery. Remember you can ask who people are and what their role is at any time.

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Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is an important part of your recovery, helping you regain independence and improve your quality of life.

Firstly, you will work with your healthcare team, assess your current health and set personal goals to help in planning your rehabilitation journey and determining suitable prosthetic options if needed.

Your team will then create a rehabilitation plan that is focused on restoring your independence and quality of life.

Your rehabilitation plan could include:

- **Mobility Support:** Exercises and activities to improve strength, balance, and mobility.
- **Prosthetic Training:** Learning to use and care for a prosthetic limb, if applicable.
- **Occupational Therapy:** Strategies to adapt daily tasks and recommend assistive devices and assess your home to see if it is safe to go home.
- **Psychological Support:** Addressing emotional well-being and coping strategies.



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Speak Up! Let people know what you need

It is important to understand your rights and take an active role in decisions about your healthcare. This includes speaking up about your needs, preferences, cultural needs and any concerns you have, so you feel listened to, informed, and involved in your care.

There are a few ways you can make sure this happens:

- Be open with your healthcare team about what matters to you and discuss all your options. If you wish, yarn with the Aboriginal health workers and Aboriginal liaison officers at the hospital and they can help you speak with the healthcare team.
- Write down your questions before appointments to help you remember everything you want to ask.
- Indigenous health organisations, like ACCHOs, can connect you with culturally safe healthcare and support.
- If it feels too much, ask a trusted family member or community member to help advocate for you.
- While you're in hospital, if something doesn't feel or look right, speak up and tell the staff. If you're still concerned, you can ask for a patient- or family-initiated medical emergency response. Look for the "You're worried, we're listening" posters around the hospital for the phone number you can call.

You have the right to be involved in decisions about your care, so don't hesitate to speak up and get the support you need.

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Aboriginal Support Services

Aboriginal support services offer culturally respectful practical and emotional support to individuals and families. They provide connections to Elders and community leaders, traditional healing practices, and guidance that help build strength, resilience, and a sense of belonging during the recovery journey.

Aboriginal support services offer:

- Connection to Elders and Community who offer guidance, traditional healing practices, and emotional support.
- Practical assistance, such as transport to medical appointments, navigating government services, or offering financial aid to support recovery.
- Culturally appropriate mental health support, including counselling, peer support groups, and resources.
- Cultural understanding and sensitivity.
- Advocacy and resources to assist in navigating the healthcare system.
- Connecting families with others who have gone through similar experiences.



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How can I find out more?

13Yarn

13 92 76 / www.13yarn.org.au/

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

WellMob

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

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

Patient initiated medical emergency response

If you are worried about your care whilst in hospital, talk to the nurses and doctors. If you still don't feel like you are being listened to, you can request a medical emergency response to raise your concerns. SA Health You're worried, we're listening | SA Health

Royal Adelaide and The Queen Elizabeth Hospitals escalation phone number Concerns about your care | Central Adelaide Local Health Network.

Preventative Health SA

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

State Government services and support for Aboriginal people.

SAACCON

<https://saacson.org.au/our-members/>

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in South Australia who provide services and supports for community

Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia

www.ahcsa.org.au/members/locations/

Peak body representing Aboriginal community-controlled health services in South Australia.

Limbs4life

www.limbs4life.org.au/

Providing support to amputees, their families and care givers.

Health Care Rights

https://www.hcscs.sa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/21_02_10-ATSI-Know-Your-Rights_f.pdf

Explains your rights when you are using South Australian Health services.

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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