



Fact Sheet #02

What to expect following amputation



Limbs 4 Life™
Empowering Amputees

Having an amputation is a life changing event. You will be faced with challenges and need to learn new ways of doing things.

This Fact Sheet explores the different phases following amputation and helps you to think about the pathways ahead of you.

The recovery time following amputation is different for everyone and can depend on a number of different factors, these can include:

- Your general health
- How quickly your amputation wound heals
- Whether you have a place or home to go to that is safe and accessible for you
- How easily you can get help and continue your rehabilitation outside the hospital

What are the phases after amputation?

After amputation the care you receive can usually be divided into three separate phases but these phases will all overlap, it's just easier to talk about them this way to help you to understand the process.

1. Acute Care Phase: This is the time in hospital when you have the amputation surgery.

The important things at this stage are good pain relief, healing of your wound and preparation for the future.

Things you might do at this time include:

- Letting the nurses and doctors know about any pain you experience so they can provide appropriate pain relief.
- If you have had a below knee amputation ask for a Removable Rigid Dressing (RRD) and/or something to help control the swelling around your amputation to protect it from knocks.

Staff will help you to become more independent.

TIP - start thinking about how life will be once you can get up and be mobile again.

2. Rehabilitation Phase: This is the time in a rehabilitation facility where a multi-disciplinary team will start caring for you.

The important things at this stage are learning to manage any pain and seeking help if you need it as well as beginning to think about what you need to do to increase your mobility and independence levels.

Things you might do at this time include:

- Getting strong and healthy.
- Increasing your levels of exercise to help with your general fitness and ability to move around.
- Learning new ways of doing things so that you can be safe and independent.
- Understanding how to take care of your new condition.

Staff will help you so that you can look after yourself and get any help you may need to be safe, healthy and happy.

It is important that you ask lots of questions about the things you don't understand. Make sure you try things (with the assistance of your therapist) before you decide you can or can't do them on your own.

3. Outpatient Care Phase: This is the time when you have returned home but still continue to attend the rehabilitation facility to work on your health care.

Things you might do at this time include:

- Continuing to work on your health and fitness.
- Increasing and working on the skills you have already been taught while you were in rehabilitation.
- Setting new goals and skills with your therapist and working on those goals together.

Once you leave rehabilitation you will still need help from some of the therapists who have worked with you. Continue to discuss your goals with your therapist. Think about returning to work, your community activities, and what you will need to help you to manage your life independently.