



Fact Sheet #06

# What to expect when trying a lower limb prosthesis



**Limbs 4 Life™**  
Empowering Amputees

A prosthesis may be used to help you to regain your mobility and independence.

This Fact Sheet explains the process of fitting your first prosthetic limb.

## What is a prosthesis?

A prosthesis is an artificial limb which is made to replace the limb you have lost. There are a number of things to think about when using a prosthesis after a lower limb amputation. These include:

- The amount of energy you will use to drive the limb.
- How good your balance is.
- How good your general health and muscle control is.
- The amount of pressure that will be placed on your stump (residual limb) and amputation wound.

Not everyone will use a prosthesis, or will find one helpful. If you can use a prosthesis, there are lots of different things to think about to ensure that the prosthesis will meet your needs.

## How do you get your first prosthesis?

The steps and stages of trying a prosthesis are:

- Choose a Prosthetist and discuss your goals. Think about the things you want the prosthesis to help you do.
- Once your wound is healed and the stump is workable, lots of measurements will be taken so that your prosthesis can be made. This usually involves taking a plaster cast, or this might be done using a scanner or another piece of technology.
- The Prosthetist will then make what is called a 'check socket' which can be changed and moulded to suit your shape.
- The Prosthetist will work with you to try on your prosthesis, ask you for feedback about; how well it fits, if it is comfortable and/or if it is causing pressure or pain
- If the 'fit' is alright, you will slowly use the prosthesis.

**TIP - make notes about how your prosthesis feels and take the notes to your next appointment.**

There are different ways of holding a prosthesis on, these are called 'suspension methods'. Suspension methods can depend on a number of different factors, including:

- The level of your amputation.
- Your skin.
- What activities you will be doing.

## Suspension methods include:

**Straps:** some prostheses are held on with a strap system, there are lots of different options depending on your level of amputation

**Anatomical:** sometimes your Prosthetist will create a suspension system that can be 'pulled on.' Once it is on it suspends over your bones around your knee

**Sleeve:** for some people with a below knee amputation, a sleeve which fits over the prosthesis socket and onto your skin can be used to hold the prosthesis on

**Pin:** there are certain types of socks and liners that roll onto your stump which have a pin at the end. The pin locks into the prosthesis to hold it on. There will be a button on the outside of the prosthesis which allows you to release and remove the prosthesis

**Vacuum:** vacuum systems are used to create an air seal against the socket. The valve in the socket lets the air out but will not let the air back in

**Suction:** it might be possible to have the socket of your prosthesis directly against your skin. This holds the prosthesis on with a really tight fit using a one-way air valve. This process usually requires your stump (residual limb) to be stable and no longer changing shape or size.

## Have the conversation

Getting used to using a prosthesis takes time. Eventually you will learn to understand what suspension method and type of prosthesis works best for you. To get the best outcome, talk to your Prosthetist, ask questions and seek more information if something doesn't make sense.