



## Returning home following a lower limb amputation

Going home following a stay in hospital can be a relief, however you need to think about what needs to be done to make your home safe and easy to get around.

This information sheet looks at what you need to consider prior to going home, and the things that you will need to help you to access, live and function independently at home.

### **What is an assistive device?**

An assistive device is the name given to equipment which aids your ability to do things, such as; wheelchairs, walking aids and shower chairs.

### **What is a structural modification?**

Structural modifications refer to parts of your home which require changes – such as; changes to doors and walls in your home and/or the addition of rails, ramps or both.

Building standards need to be met when home modifications are made so it is important you seek the correct assistance. If you require a structural modification, you should ask for help from your Occupational Therapist to make sure that you get the devices that suit your needs. It is important to discuss funding options and costs for these items.

## What to consider following a lower limb amputation?

### General home considerations:

- Consider using assistive devices to help you pick up things that are on the floor, placed up high or items that are difficult to reach.
- If you have stairs, either inside or outside of the house, you may need alternative access. You may need to consider having a ramp or stair lift put into your home.
- There are lots of places where a hand rail on the wall can be added to make things safer for you – especially in the bathroom and near any stairs.
- Examine whether you are able to sit and get up from your chair/s. If you have difficulty, chair/s may need replacing, have arms added or they may need to be adjusted in height.
- Check whether your wheelchair easily turns around in your home.
- You may need to consider whether lighting needs to be added or switches moved to make it easier and safer for you when it's dark, or consider in-door sensor lights.

### Kitchen considerations:

- Consider the height of benches and whether you can reach them, particularly if you are using a wheelchair.
- If you use a walking aid, consider whether you can carry something with two hands to get it safely from one part of the kitchen to another (eg. carrying your dinner plate from the bench to the table). If you can't do this safely, you may need a stable walker to assist you.

### Bathroom considerations:

The bathroom can be a high risk place because the floor can be wet and slippery which means it's easy to fall and hurt yourself.

- Consider the amount of room you need to turn a wheelchair so that you can safely transfer to the toilet, bath or shower.
- Consider how you will sit or stand in the bath or shower to wash. Many people use a shower chair or bath board to sit on, in order to be safe. A hand held shower head is also a good way to make washing easy.
- Getting onto a shower chair can be hard if there is a lip on the ground for a shower screen. If that's the case, this lip can often be removed and a curtain installed to make it safer and easier for you.

### Gardening considerations:

Remember that ladders are dangerous, and you should not climb one with a prosthesis!

- Consider whether you can kneel down and safely get back up again when working in the garden. If you have trouble, perhaps you need something to assist you
- You may want to consider installing outdoor taps at a higher level to enable you to turn them on safely and easily.



**TIP - there are many products that can help you to live independently.**