



## How can I support my partner / loved one?

Partners and carers often ask how they can best support the person that they care about prior to, or following amputation. The level of support required can greatly depend on the person that you are supporting. Here we explore some of the reasons why.

### **My partner / loved one has just had an amputation**

Learning that your partner or loved one has just had an amputation can be difficult to deal with, especially if the amputation was not planned. There will be a range of thoughts and questions running through your mind and you will experience a range of emotions.

### **My partner / loved one has just been told that they will have an amputation**

If your partner or significant other is facing a planned amputation, then you may also experience similar emotions, however, you will also have time to process what is happening and ask all the questions that you need to.

Regardless of whether the amputation was planned or unplanned, there are a range of questions that you can ask the doctor and/or healthcare team.

You might like to consider the following:

### **Pain and pain management**

- What support is provided for pain management?
- We have heard about phantom pain. Does everyone experience this pain and how will it be managed?

## **Can you tell us about recovery after surgery?**

- How long does the recovery process take?
- What is involved in the recovery process?
- How long will it take before my partner can get up and move around?
- What can he/she do to assist with the recovery process?
- How will the amputation affect my partner's mobility or functionality?
- Will they be fitted with a prosthesis to walk and if so, how long does that process take?
- How long does it take to be fitted with an upper limb prosthesis?

## **What will my partner's quality of life be like after amputation?**

- Will my partner be able to return to work, care for our family, drive again, go on holidays and take part in recreation and leisure activities?

## **How do you know what support to provide to a loved one?**

Following amputation surgery, most people will be sent to rehabilitation for continued care, and to help them to adjust to life without a limb or limbs.

The rehabilitation team also work with the person to help them to:

- Regain confidence;
- Regain mobility and functionality;
- Learn to transfer;
- Work with and use new equipment, such as wheelchairs, crutches and prosthetic devices; and,
- Navigate goals to independent living.

If you want to know how to support your partner, the best thing to do is to ask them! While it might seem difficult to sit back, especially if you see your partner struggling, don't automatically jump in and do things for them. It's important that they work out how to navigate tasks and challenges for themselves.

## **Dealing with emotions**

Getting used to living with an amputation can be an adjustment for everybody. Your loved one may become angry, emotional, frustrated, or reserved and quiet when they are usually chatty. If you are the most significant other, then chances are that they may become frustrated with you.

You don't need to suffer in silence. Speak to your doctor/GP about supports, catch up with a friend for a coffee, make sure that you maintain some time for you, to take a break and go for a walk, or just do something away from the situation.

Limbs 4 Life has a range of support programs available. We can arrange a peer support visit or call so that you can speak to someone who has gone through an amputation and regained their independence. We also have resources available, or you might like to join a support group or network.