



Information for the public about physiotherapy following amputation of a lower limb

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British Association of Chartered
Physiotherapists in Amputee Rehabilitation



NICE has accredited the process used by the British Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Amputee Rehabilitation. Accreditation is valid for 5 years from 10 January 2017 and is applicable to the guideline processes described in 'Clinical guidelines for the pre and post-operative physiotherapy management of adults with lower limb amputations'.

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■ Does this information apply to me?

Yes, if you are an adult who has had a lower limb amputation. This information is for people who have had or are having an amputation from the ankle up to the pelvis. It does not cover amputations in the foot or toes.

■ What does the physiotherapist do?

A physiotherapist is an important member of the team. They will play a key role in your hospital stay and treatment, both before and after your amputation.

The physiotherapist will work with you and other team members to set your treatment goals. They will give you information and advice about what you might be able to do after your amputation. This will include if a false leg (prosthesis) will help you.

The physiotherapist has a number of jobs which include:

- Giving you exercises
- Helping you to come to terms with your amputation
- Looking at your wound
- Checking the swelling and treating it as needed
- Helping you learn how to get out of the bed, wheelchair and toilet
- Asking you about your pain
- Talking to you about whether or not you might be able to use a prosthetic leg
- Helping you get home from hospital

■ What experience should my physiotherapist have?

Your physiotherapist will know what may affect your treatment and recovery. This includes your medical problems, the level of amputation, the surgery and how your wound heals. Your physiotherapist will be able to give you information about having a prosthesis.

■ What will my patient journey be like?

Your physiotherapist will give you information about the stages of your treatment and where this will take place. After your operation treatment may continue at a community hospital or as an outpatient. Sometimes treatment is completed before you go home.

Your physiotherapist will tell you if a prosthesis will help you. If a prosthesis will help you, you will be referred to a prosthetic centre. If a prosthesis is not going to be helpful, you may still be referred to a local team who are used to working with amputees.

You may want to meet another amputee with your family or carer. Please ask your physiotherapist about this. This can happen before or after your amputation.

Your physiotherapist will also give you written information where possible about exercise, treatment and support at home.

■ What am I likely to be able to do?

Your physiotherapist will assess your joints, muscles, and balance. They will use this information to help you set realistic treatment goals.

It is important to know that using a prosthesis uses a lot of energy and not everyone will be able to use one.

■ How do I look after my remaining leg?

Your physiotherapist will give you advice about how to look after your remaining leg and how to check it for any changes.

■ When will I meet my physiotherapist?

You may meet your physiotherapist before your amputation surgery. This may not always be possible. If possible, your physiotherapist will carry out an assessment before your surgery and talk to your team about the level

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of amputation you will have. They will give you information about your rehabilitation process. They might teach you the exercises you will need to do after your surgery and how to use a wheelchair. They will ask you lots of questions about your home so that they can work with the occupational therapist to start planning your safe return home. They will talk to you about what help you might need when you get home.

■ **When will my physiotherapy start?**

Your physiotherapy should start on the first day after your operation. As long as your pain is under control, your physiotherapist will teach you exercises, check your lungs and help you to transfer to a wheelchair.

■ **Will I need any equipment?**

Your physiotherapist will talk to you about equipment you may need during your treatment or once you go home. They will work closely with the occupational therapist to decide what equipment may be needed.

■ **Is swelling normal?**

Yes. Your physiotherapist will give you a special stretchy elastic sock to wear to help control this swelling, as swelling can affect wound healing and how soon a prosthesis can be fitted.

■ **When will I learn to walk?**

Your physiotherapist will assess you to decide if a prosthesis will help you. Part of this assessment may include using an early walking aid. This is a piece of equipment used with your physiotherapist to get you standing up and taking steps. It is used before a prosthetic limb is made. Not everyone is able to use this equipment or walk again after an amputation. You may be safer and have more energy by using a wheelchair.

■ **What happens if I fall?**

People who have had an amputation are more likely to fall. Your physiotherapist will give you information about what you can do to prevent falls and how to get up off the floor if you fall.

■ **What happens if I have pain?**

If you have stump pain or phantom limb pain, your physiotherapist will work closely with your doctors and nurses to make sure you have the right information and treatment. Everyone is different and you will get the treatment appropriate for you.

■ **What can I do?**

Stay healthy.

This includes

- not smoking
- eating a balanced diet
- taking regular exercise

If you work with your physiotherapist and team, you will give yourself the best chance of a good recovery.

