

FACT SHEET

Pain After Amputation & How to Use Desensitisation Therapy



What is stump pain?

Stump pain is pain you feel in the remaining part of your limb. It can come from healing tissues, nerve sensitivity or nerve damage. Stump pain can be felt on the skin of your stump, around the amputation site or deeper in tissues and bone.

What is phantom limb pain?

This is pain you feel as if it is coming from the limb that is no longer there. Your brain still “remembers” the missing limb. This can feel like burning, tingling, electric shocks or cramping.

Why do I have pain?

Both stump and phantom limb pain are very common after amputation. The nerves that were cut can “misfire” and send confusing signals to the brain. The good news is that there are ways to make this better.

What is desensitisation therapy?

This type of therapy helps normalise abnormal skin sensations and reduce pain following an amputation.

How does it work?

By stimulating the area with different sensations (pressures, temperatures and textures), you are re-educating your brain to process these impulses more normally.



It works best when you start soon after your amputation and with other forms of therapy, like physiotherapy and mirror therapy.

Before you start, remember...

- If you are afraid to try this or your stump is very painful, start with an area that doesn't hurt and work your way to an area that does.
- Start gently and slowly increase pressure over time as it becomes more comfortable.
- Concentration is important. Think of how it feels, and look at your stump as you do this.
- Try this a few times a day for just five minutes. Consistency and repetition are important.

Now, let's give it a try!

Set yourself up with materials of choice in a comfortable place. Here are a few suggestions. Pick what works best for you.

1. Rub your stump with different materials, like a soft cloth, feather, dry rice or velcro



2. Tap your stump gently with your fingers
3. Massage your stump gently using lotion or cream
4. Roll a soft ball (like a tennis or therapy ball) over your stump
5. Try a heat or cold pack.



⚠ Always wrap heat or ice in a cloth and never put it directly on the skin.



For more helpful resources, please visit our website: www.pw.co.nz/resources

Know that you don't have to manage this alone.

Ask for help if your pain:

- Changes in how it feels or gets worse suddenly
- Doesn't get better
- Comes with fever, swelling, or redness
- Makes it hard to sleep or use your artificial limb.

Talk to your family doctor, physiotherapist, or rehabilitation team.

Finally...

This takes time and patience. Try these techniques regularly and don't be afraid to ask questions. Everyone's journey is different – find what works for you!

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