

Learning you are facing an amputation can be scary. Accepting the idea of the surgery is not always easy and can lead to many questions.

There are different healthcare people who you can meet to ask questions before your amputation (depending on where you live).

These include:

- **Speaking to a nurse or doctor** about your recovery, your treatment and what may happen after surgery.
- **Speaking to a prosthetist* or a physiotherapist**** about what level of mobility you may achieve after amputation.
- **Asking to meet an amputee** (a Peer Support Service volunteer via www.peersupport.nz).

Visit a rehabilitation centre if you are likely to go to one after your surgery to find out what services they provide. They can also talk to you about what you can do before your operation to be as fit as possible both physically and emotionally.

If you are not going to a rehabilitation centre, find out where you will be going and what support is available for you.

**Prosthetist: Makes and fits artificial limbs (prosthetic).*

***Physiotherapist: Helps people improve their movement and fitness with physical exercise and advice.*

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Learn more about Peke Waihangā

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Artificial Limb Service



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FACT SHEET

Becoming an Amputee



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Pre-amputation and the decision to amputate

Get ready for your amputation by **asking as many questions and learning as much as you can** to help you understand what lies ahead.

The more information you have, the more confidence you will have making decisions about your future.

- Write down any questions or concerns you have.**
- Arrange a time to **discuss these with your doctor or healthcare provider.**
- Take whānau or a friend with you to listen or take notes** as it may be hard for you to remember everything you are told.

Questions you might ask include:

- How will I manage day-to-day tasks?
- How will I look after myself?
- Will I be able to regain my independence?
- Will a prosthetic give me quality of life?
- Will I be able to do the things I used to do?
- Will I still experience pain?
- How different will my life become?

It is not always possible to save a limb, so some people have no choice but to undergo an amputation whether this is due to disease, infection, cancer or trauma.

Becoming an amputee and adjusting to limb loss

Becoming an amputee is life changing. There are many people to support you as you learn new ways of doing things.

An amputation is a big change to your body and

your life. **Everyone reacts differently to the loss of a limb (or limbs) and it is completely normal to feel strong emotions.** Limb loss can leave you feeling anxious, vulnerable and uncertain about the future. Some people grieve for their loss. You may feel scared, angry, frustrated or sad.

Working through your feelings may take time but it is important to **remember adapting to these changes becomes easier over time.** Some common difficulties include:

- The ability to complete everyday tasks.
- A change to your level of independence.
- A difference in your mobility.
- Concerns about your body image / sexuality.
- General everyday changes to your lifestyle.

Remember support is available, you don't have to go through this experience alone.



Make sure you ask for help if you need it, whether that is at the beginning of your journey, several months later or years down the track.

Emotional health and wellbeing

Your emotional health and mental wellbeing are as important as your physical health.

- Ask for support from the Peer Support Service.**

Peer volunteers are likely to understand how you may be feeling and can help you adjust to changes in your day-to-day life. Ask for a volunteer at www.peersupport.nz.

- Join a local support group.**

Amputee support groups provide a friendly and comfortable place to share experiences with one another and help reduce feelings of isolation.

- Take part in an online discussion group.**

Online groups can provide connections to the wider community.

- Seek professional help.**

You may like to speak to a trained counsellor to help deal with your emotions. Your doctor can help refer you to a professional.

- Talk to the people in your life** about how you are feeling.

- Stay connected to your friends.**

Share your thoughts with others as this will help you deal with the physical and emotional changes of how your body looks and feels.



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