

# FACT SHEET

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## Things to Know Following Amputation



# What is the journey after amputation?

Having an amputation is a life-changing event. **You will be faced with challenges and need to learn new ways of doing things.**

This fact sheet explores the different stages following amputation to help you understand the pathway ahead of you.

After amputation there can be **three separate care stages** (though these may overlap).

## 1. Acute care stage

This is the time in hospital when you have amputation surgery.

At this stage you need **good pain relief, healing of the wound, and preparation for the future.**

Things you might do at this time include:

- Letting the nurses and doctors know about any **pain** you experience or changes in your pain levels.
- You may be provided with a **garment or liner** to help control the **swelling** around your amputation.

## 2. Rehabilitation stage

Important things at this stage are:

- Learning to **manage any pain** and seeking help from your GP or rehab team.
- Working on ways to **increase your mobility** and independence levels.

Things you might do at this time include:

- **Eating well** and **taking your medications.**
- **Increasing your levels of exercise.** This

helps with your general fitness and your ability to move around.

- Doing **amputee specific exercises** as instructed by the physiotherapist.



- Learning **new ways of doing things** so that you can be safe and independent.
- Understanding how to **take care of yourself**.
- **Talking with other amputees** about the journey you are on.

Staff will help you so that you can **look after yourself** and get any help you may need to be safe, healthy and happy.

It is important that you **ask lots of questions about things you don't understand**.

**Make sure you try things** (with the rehab team) before you decide you can or can't do them on your own.

**Don't overdo it. Make good decisions.**

### 3. Community care stage

Things you might do at this time include:

- Continuing to **work on your health and fitness**. This may include joining new exercise groups.
- Increasing and **working on the skills you have already been taught** while you were in rehabilitation.
- **Setting new goals and skills** with the rehab team and working on those goals together.

Once you leave rehabilitation, you will still need help from some of the other healthcare workers.

Think about **returning to work, your community activities**, and what you will need to help you to **manage your life independently**.

**Tip:** Start thinking about how life will be once you can get up and be mobile again.



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For more helpful resources, please visit our website: [www.pw.co.nz/resources](http://www.pw.co.nz/resources)

## Recovery

The recovery time following amputation is **different for everyone** and can depend on several factors. These can include:

- Your **general health**.
- **Smoking** – this affects wound healing. **Quit smoking if you can**. If you'd like support to stop, contact your primary healthcare team.
- **Your mental health** – your own, or that of your family/whānau. An amputation is a challenge both physically and mentally. Please let the healthcare teams know if you would like more support. Peke Waihanga offers a Peer Support Service, where you can be put in touch with a trained volunteer who has gone through similar limb loss to you. Visit [www.peersupport.nz](http://www.peersupport.nz).

### **Adapting to life after amputation takes time.**

Be kind to yourself, and don't be afraid to ask for help. With the right tools and support, **you can live independently and do the things that matter to you.**

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## Learn more about Peke Waihangā

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