

FACT SHEET

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.



For more helpful resources, please visit our website: 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.

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.**

Contacts

Auckland Centre

7 Horopito Street,
Mount Eden, Auckland 1024
📞 0508 630 630
✉️ auckland@nzals.co.nz

Wellington Centre

42-46 Mein Street,
Newtown, Wellington 6021
📞 0508 389 389
✉️ wellington@nzals.co.nz

Hamilton Centre

222 Pembroke Street,
Hamilton 3204
📞 0508 838 838
✉️ hamilton@nzals.co.nz

Christchurch Centre

330 Burwood Road,
Christchurch 8083
📞 0508 383 383
✉️ christchurch@nzals.co.nz

Tauranga Centre

160 Fraser Street,
Tauranga 3112
📞 0508 434 434
✉️ tauranga@nzals.co.nz

Dunedin Centre

464 Cumberland Street,
Dunedin 9016
📞 0508 474 474
✉️ dunedin@nzals.co.nz

National Office

📞 (04) 385 9410
✉️ info@nzals.co.nz

Learn more about Peke Waihanga

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- 💻 www.orthoticsservice.co.nz
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Peke Waihanga
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