

# FACT SHEET

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## Caring for Your Limb After Amputation



## Post-operative stump care – what is it?

This is the care you receive in hospital after surgery. For amputation, it includes looking after your general health, wound care, and managing your pain.



## Healing after surgery

It is important to take care of your general health to help your body to heal. Your medical team may give you specific guidance on this – it's important you follow this advice.

### Here's how you can help your body heal:

**Eat a healthy diet** – eat plenty of whole foods, like vegetables, fruit, whole grains and protein. **If you have diabetes**, maintaining stable glucose levels will give your body the best chance to heal. See [www.healthify.co.nz](http://www.healthify.co.nz) for nutrition advice.

**Get enough sleep** – rest is important while you are recovering and healing. Tell your family and friends how they can best support you to get enough rest.

**Complete your exercise programme** – your physiotherapist may give you exercises to do while you recover. **It's important to do all of them as instructed**, to stay strong, flexible and help your stump heal properly. Please refer to the Peke Waihangā Exercise Book which can be found at [www.pw.co.nz/resources](http://www.pw.co.nz/resources).

**Quit smoking if you can** – it slows down healing. If you'd like support to stop, contact your primary healthcare team.

## **If you are a below knee amputee – things to avoid**

Keeping your knee bent for a long time can make the muscles around your knee tighten and shorten. This can make it hard to straighten your leg and fit an artificial limb.

### **To prevent this:**

- Use a stump board in your wheelchair (if you don't have one, ask your occupational therapist).
- Don't put a towel under your amputated limb.
- Don't let your stump hang off the bed or wheelchair for long periods.

## **Caring for your stump**

### **The first weeks**

In the days after your amputation, doctors, physios and nurses will help you with your stump care.

When you leave the hospital, a nurse may visit you at home for wound care. Please continue to wash and moisturise your stump and other leg.

If you have questions or concerns about your wound, contact your primary healthcare team.

### **After wound healing**

Stump care is important after your wound is healed. It will be your responsibility to take good

care of your stump. This involves regular cleaning, thorough drying and moisturising of your stump.

You may be provided with a compression sock or stump shrinker by the Peke Waihanga rehab team. Please follow their advice.

**Rigid removable dressing** – If you are a below knee amputee, you may have been fitted with a rigid removable dressing (RRD). This is a hard 'cap' over the end of your stump. The purpose of this is to:

- Decrease swelling.
- Promote wound healing.
- Provide protection.
- Help shape the limb.

RRD's are not indicated for use in above-knee amputation. If you are an above-knee amputee, the Peke Waihanga rehab team will guide you on what type of shrinker is available for you.

## Caring for your remaining leg

Following an amputation, it is important to monitor and take care of your remaining leg and foot. Inspect your remaining leg and foot for any abnormalities every day.

**If you cannot see the bottom of your foot easily** – use a hand mirror or get a family member to check the bottom of your foot. This is important if you have reduced feeling in your remaining leg/foot.

Pay close attention to the colour and temperature of your remaining leg/foot. If very hot or very cold, or painful, please get this checked by a health professional.



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



**See your healthcare provider as soon as possible if you notice:**

- Redness, swelling, severe pain, leaking of fluid/pus, non-healing wounds, blackness or a rash on your stump.
- Broken skin, bleeding, changes in skin tone/colour, black toes, severe swelling, or temperature changes in your remaining leg.
- You are feeling generally unwell, extremely tired, dizzy or 'cloudy'.

**If you are a bilateral amputee**, it is important to monitor both of your stumps for any changes. Report any skin changes to your doctor/nurse or your prosthetist immediately.

If you have any questions please contact your Peke Waihanga or primary care team.

## Contacts

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## Learn more about Peke Waihangā

💻 [www.pw.co.nz](http://www.pw.co.nz)

💻 [www.orthoticservice.co.nz](http://www.orthoticservice.co.nz)

💻 [www.peersupport.nz](http://www.peersupport.nz)

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**Peke Waihangā**  
Artificial Limb Service



**Amputees  
Federation  
of New Zealand  
Incorporated**

*Produced with support from Limbs 4 Life Inc.*