

Caring for your remaining leg

Following an amputation, it is very important to monitor and take care of your remaining leg and foot. It is good to get into the habit of inspecting your remaining leg 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 particularly important if you have reduced sensation in your remaining leg.

Pay close attention to the colour and temperature of your remaining leg. A very hot or very cold leg can indicate a number of problems.

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, it is important to consult your primary health provider as soon as possible:

- Redness, severe pain, swelling, leaking of fluid/pus, non-healing wound, areas of blackness or a rash on your stump
- Broken areas, severe pain, changes in skin tone/colour, blackness of toes, severe swelling, temperature changes of your remaining leg
- General unwellness, or severe fatigue, feeling cloudy or dizzy

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

If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this fact sheet, contact your primary health care team, or your Peke Waihangā team member.

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Peke Waihangā
Artificial Limb Service



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FACT SHEET

Caring for your residual limb after amputation



What is Post-Operative Stump Care?

Post-operative care is the care that you received immediately following a surgical procedure. In the case of an amputation this involves general health, wound care, and pain relief.



Assisting Post-Operative Healing

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

You should ensure that you are getting enough sleep, have a healthy diet and are completing your exercise program.

Maintaining a healthy diet – eating nutritious food will help with your healing process. If you have diabetes, maintaining stable glucose levels will give your body the best chance to heal.

Sleeping – Getting the right amount of rest is important. While you are recovering, communicate with your family and friends about how they can best support you to get enough rest.

Exercise – Your physiotherapist may give you some gentle exercises while you are recovering. These are very important to keep you strong, and flexible.

Giving up smoking – smoking is very detrimental to healing. If you would like more information, or support to give up smoking contact your primary healthcare team.

What are the things you should never do?

If you are a below knee amputee, it is important not to keep your knee bent for long periods of time.

This can lead to shortening, or contracture, of the muscles that cross the knee joint. This can make it difficult to fit a prosthesis.

This can be avoided by the following:

- Do not place a towel underneath your amputated limb
- Do not hang your stump over the edge of the bed or wheelchair for long
- Always use a stump board on your wheelchair. Ask your Occupational Therapist if one has not been provided for you



Caring for your Stump

The First Weeks

In the initial days after your amputation – your stump management will be handled by your doctors and nurses. When you leave the hospital a nurse may visit you at home to tend to your wound. When this ends, it is important to follow their instructions as to how to clean and dress your own wound if required.

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

After Wound Healing

Stump care continues to be important after your wound is healed – it is your responsibility to take care good care of your stump. This involves regularly cleaning, thoroughly drying and moisturising your stump. You may be provided with a compression sock or stump shrinker.

You should follow your therapist and/or prosthetists advice as to how to use this, and contact them with any questions.

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, your doctor or nurse will guide any dressings required.



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