ÖSSUR®
LIFE WITHOUT LIMITATIONS

Life With Prosthetics









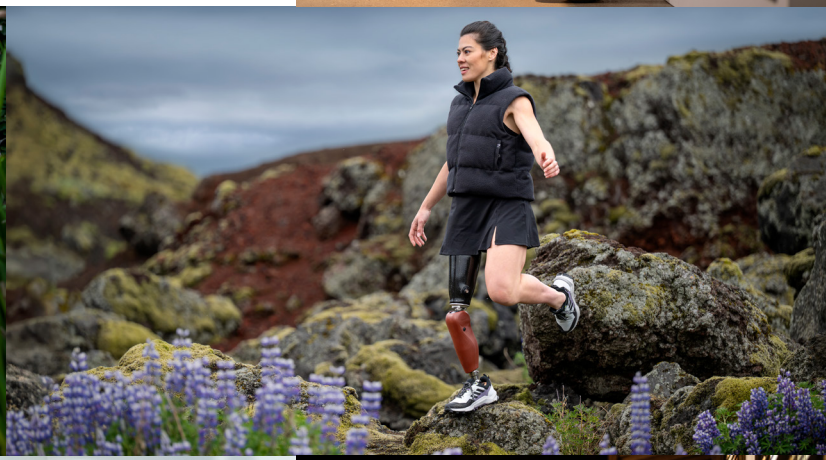







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Contents

Introduction to Life with Prosthetics 5

Your Support Network 6
- Your Healthcare Team 6
- Your Family and Friends 8
- Peer-to-Peer Support 10

What to Expect as You Recover 12
- Psychological Aspects of Limb Loss 13
- Adapting to Limb Loss 16
- Wound Healing and Preparing for a Prosthesis 18
- Tips for Choosing a Prosthetist 22

Understanding and Adapting to Your Prosthetic Leg 25
- The Process of Making Your Prosthetic Leg 25
- About Prosthetic Legs 30
- Prosthetic Leg Diagrams 33
- Prosthetic Leg Sockets 34
- Prosthetic Leg Liners 36
- Prosthetic Leg Knees 38
- Prosthetic Leg Feet 40
- Prosthetic Leg Components 42

Caring for Yourself 44
- Checking Your Limb 44
- Care for Your Emotional Health 46
- The Importance of Weight Control 46
- Exercises for Above-the-Knee Amputees 48
- Exercises for Below-the-Knee Amputees 51

Tips for Everyday Life with Prosthetics 54
- Using a Prosthesis 54
- Personal Hygiene 55
- Socket Fit and Prosthetist Visits 56
- Going Back to Work 57
- Travelling 58
- Sports and Recreation 59

Financial Considerations 61





Introduction to Life with Prosthetics

Living with limb loss can be a big adjustment, but it does not have to mean there are limits on what you can do. People all over the world live full, meaningful lives with the help of prosthetic devices. Each person moves forward in their own way, at their own speed and toward their own goals.

At Össur, we develop and provide prosthetic technologies designed to support people living with limb loss or limb difference in moving through life with greater confidence and independence. Alongside our prosthetic solutions, we aim to make helpful information, practical resources and shared experiences more accessible to you and those supporting you.

This guide has been created to help you better understand what may come next after an amputation. Inside, you'll find practical information about recovery, prosthetic options and components, and aspects of everyday life that may become more familiar as you adjust.

Learning to use a prosthesis takes time, and everyone's experience is different. There is no set schedule, no "right" pace and no single path to follow. Your prosthetist and healthcare team will play an important role in guiding your individual rehabilitation and prosthetic care.

Confidence often develops gradually — through small wins, new experiences and moments that begin to feel easier. The right prosthetic solution, together with appropriate clinical care and support, can help create new possibilities for how you move and live.

You'll also hear from people living with limb loss who share their own experiences, perspectives and practical learnings. Through our technology, educational resources and ambassador community, Össur aims to provide useful information and encouragement as you navigate life with prosthetics.

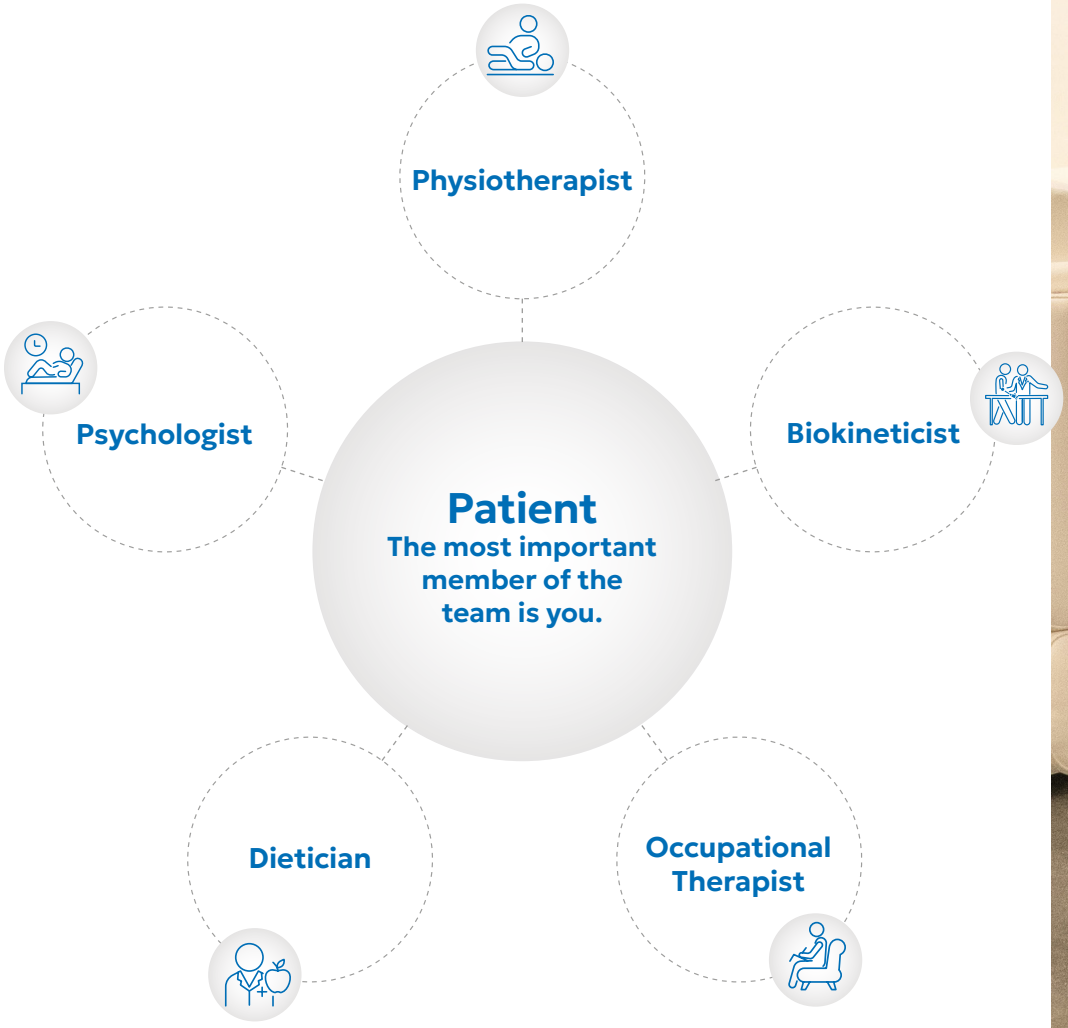
Your Support Network

Life with prosthetics is about more than recovering from an illness or injury — it is about adapting, rebuilding confidence and living life as fully as possible.

Taking care of your physical and emotional wellbeing is an important part of this process. Your healthcare team, family, friends and wider support network can all play a valuable role along the way.

Your Healthcare Team

Your prosthetist will be by your side on the road to recovery, but you will most likely need help from other medical professionals as well:







Physiotherapist

A physiotherapist helps you move and use your body safely. They work with you after amputation to build strength, improve movement and help you become as independent as possible.

Biokineticist

A biokineticist is an exercise specialist who helps your body heal and get stronger through the right kinds of movement. They play an important role in helping you return to an active life – at home, at work or in sports.

Occupational Therapist

An occupational therapist helps you relearn everyday activities. This may include self-care, work tasks or hobbies. Their goal is to help you feel more independent and confident in daily life.

Dietician

A dietician helps you understand what foods support healing and good health. They guide you on what to eat to feel stronger, recover well and reach your health goals.

Psychologist

A psychologist helps you care for your emotional well-being. They offer support, counseling or therapy to help you cope with changes, feelings and challenges as you adjust after surgery.

Your Family and Friends

The people around you can play an important role in your journey. Friends and family often want to help, even if they are not always sure what you need. Talking openly, being patient and taking the time to understand one another can make a meaningful difference.

Support can take many forms. Sometimes it is practical, such as helping with daily tasks, driving you to appointments or adjusting routines at home. At other times, it may simply mean being there — listening, encouraging you or giving you the time and space you need to learn and adjust. It is also natural for the kind of support you need to change over time.

As your confidence grows and daily life becomes more familiar, you may find that your needs change too. What matters is finding a balance that works for you — one that encourages independence while knowing help is available when you need it.

Friends and family are learning and adapting alongside you. Sharing information, setting clear boundaries and explaining what is helpful can build greater understanding and confidence for everyone. You do not need to explain everything at once, and you do not need to have all the answers.

Living with limb loss does not mean navigating every experience on your own. With time, understanding and encouragement, the people close to you can become a valuable part of your support network as you adapt and move forward.





Peer-to-Peer Support

Julie Rogers

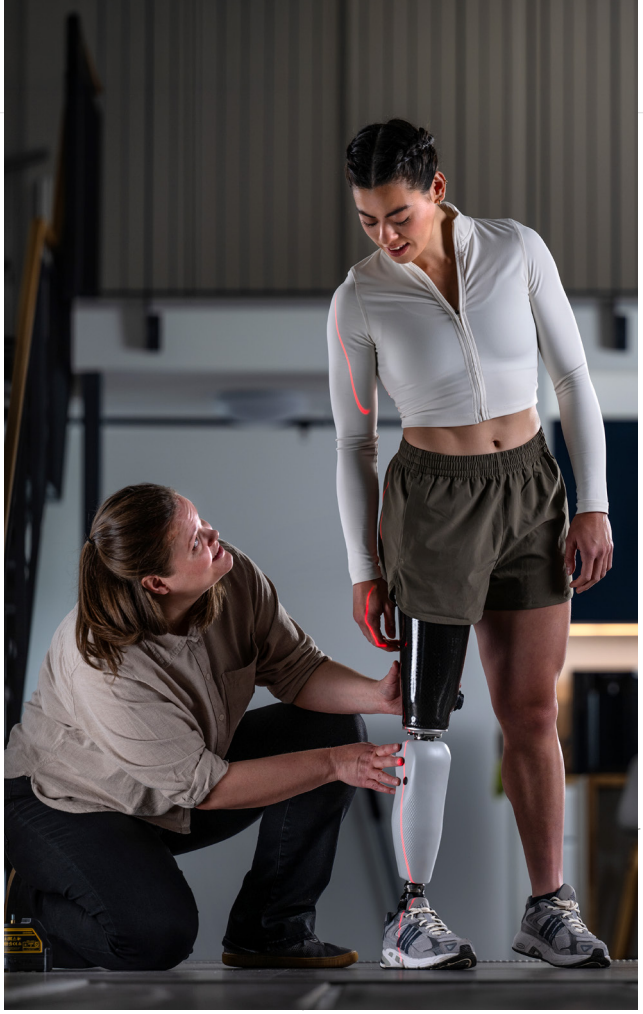


What has been your experience with showing your prosthetic leg in public, and how do you navigate that today?

Over time, my relationship with being seen with a prosthetic leg has definitely evolved. From a young age, I chose not to hide it, partly because it felt like the path of least resistance, and partly because it just made sense to me. Having my prosthetic visible, whether by wearing shorts or skirts, removed a lot of uncertainty for other people. Instead of wondering what was 'wrong,' they could simply see it.

I don't know why I ever felt a responsibility to make things easier for others, but in practice, being open about my prosthetic reduced awkward questions and assumptions. It streamlined interactions and lowered the barrier for conversation. Importantly, I've never felt shame about my disability. That's largely because my family and the people closest to me never made me feel like there was anything to hide. Because of that support, showing my prosthetic never changed how I saw myself.

In many ways, I came to embrace it as part of my identity. While I sometimes choose clothing for practical or fashion reasons, it's never about hiding my leg. I don't shy away from it, it's simply part of who I am.



What advice would you give to other prosthetic users?

One of the most important things I've learned from meeting such a wide range of amputees is that there is no single 'right' way to do this. What really matters is finding what's important to you and what you feel comfortable and happy embracing.

A prosthetic can be a visible marker of difference, and for some people, showing it openly becomes part of accepting and talking about limb loss. But that's only one piece of the picture. I always encourage other amputees to look beyond the prosthetic and focus on who they are as a person, their identity, their interests, and what makes them feel fulfilled. That sense of self is just as important in rehabilitation as it is in everyday happiness and acceptance.

When I was younger, I often felt a responsibility to show other amputees, especially those who were struggling, that life can still be positive. Limb loss doesn't have to define your outlook or limit your future. It can be one leg, two legs, or anything in between, but it doesn't change your ability to live fully.

What I learned early on is that amputation can be a very small part of who you are, if you let it be. Thanks to prosthetic solutions, it can become a manageable inconvenience rather than the central focus of your life, provided you have the determination to move past it being 'the big thing.'

Over time, I've realised how important it is not to tether yourself to your disability. Disability carries a lot of associations, and they're not always positive. My advice is not to over fixate on it. Instead, try to minimise the space it takes up, so you can fully invest in everything else that makes you who you are.

What to Expect as You Recover

Recovery after an amputation is different for everyone. Healing and recovery take time, and the process can vary from person to person and from surgery to surgery.

After surgery, you may experience some of the following:

- Discomfort, swelling or pain
- Medication to help manage pain
- Stitches on your residual limb (stump)
- A drainage tube to help remove extra fluid
- A bandage (surgical dressing) covering your leg
- A catheter
- Phantom sensations or phantom pain

All of these are normal parts of early recovery, and your healthcare team is there to support you through them. Your doctor will provide guidance on what to expect, how to care for your limb and on any concerning symptoms you should watch for after surgery.

Phantom Sensation and Phantom Pain

It is common to feel like your leg is still there after amputation. You might also feel pain in the part of the limb that was removed. These feelings are called phantom sensation and phantom pain. Many people experience them, especially in the early stages of recovery. The exact cause is not fully understood. If you have phantom sensations, you might forget that your leg is no longer there. This can increase your risk of falling. Because of this, it is very important to move slowly and carefully at first.

Medical Terms

Phantom limb pain: A pain that feels like it is in your missing leg

Phantom sensation: A feeling that your missing leg is still there

Residual limb: The part of your leg that remains after amputation. It is sometimes called the "stump"

Surgical dressing: A bandage covering your surgical incision

Take your time before standing up or moving, especially when getting in and out of bed or chairs. Pausing and thinking before you move can help prevent falls and injuries.

As your body heals and you adjust to the physical changes, you may notice emotional changes as well. Recovery is not only physical – there can also be emotional and psychological aspects. This is a normal part of the process, and support is available to help you through it.

Psychological Aspects of Limb Loss

Grief is Normal, but so is Relief

Everyone responds to limb loss in their own way. Your emotional reaction is personal, and there is no right or wrong way to feel. Losing a limb can feel similar to losing a loved one – where you go through stages of grief as part of healing and adjusting. Other people may feel liberated, or a sense of independence – especially if they had been dealing with a long period of pain, medical procedures and inability to walk.



Grieving gives opportunities for healing, renewal, growth and spiritual development. There will be times when your emotional recovery progresses smoothly, yet there may also be times when you're overwhelmed by painful feelings and limiting beliefs. It's important to know that these feelings are normal and that they can be overcome through the continuous support of a psychologist until you're fully adjusted to your new physical image and have adapted to your environment.

– Ernst van Dyk, bilateral amputee

Feelings Are Part of Healing

It is natural to experience a range of emotions as you recover and adjust. You may feel sadness, anger, fear, frustration or hope — and these feelings may change from day to day.

During more difficult moments, connecting with family, friends, your community, spiritual or faith-based support, or peer support groups may be helpful. It can also help when the people close to you understand that emotional changes can be part of adjusting to limb loss, creating greater patience and understanding for everyone.

Some people find it particularly valuable to connect with others who have experienced limb loss. Your prosthetist or healthcare team may be able to introduce you to a peer, amputee community or local support group.

Helpful Tip!
Set realistic goals and work toward becoming more independent, one step at a time.

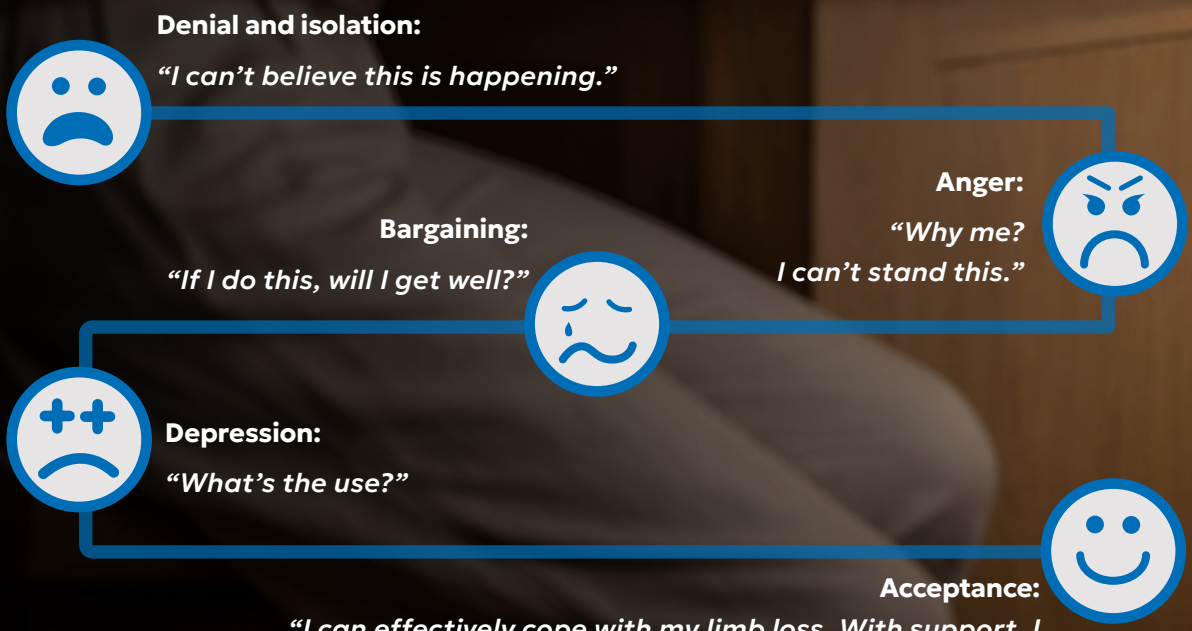
Counseling Can Help

At times, the emotional impact of recovery and adjusting to limb loss can feel difficult to manage. Professional counselling can provide additional support. Speaking with a psychologist, counsellor or other qualified mental health professional can help you work through emotions, develop coping strategies and support your overall wellbeing.

Over time, some people discover new strengths, perspectives or a sense of personal growth. Limb loss can affect many areas of life, and looking after your emotional wellbeing can be an important part of adapting and moving forward.

Below are the Five Stages of Loss, a framework that may help you recognise and understand some of the emotions associated with loss and change. These experiences are different for everyone and do not necessarily happen in a particular order.

The Five Stages of Loss





Adapting to Limb Loss

Recovering from an amputation takes time and patience. For many people with a lower-limb amputation, recovery can be thought of in three main phases:

- Wound healing
- Learning to walk and move again (mobilisation)
- Getting back to daily life (reintegration)

It is important to realise that everyone's experience is different. Your care and recovery plan may not look exactly like the steps described here.

Medical Terms

Mobilisation: Learning to walk and move again

Reintegration: Getting back to daily life

Compression therapy: Wearing a shaping sleeve on your limb

What to Expect

There is no strict timeline that fits everyone. However, these general and expected milestones for the first year below may help you understand what recovery can look like.

Month 1 — Recovering from surgery

This is the beginning of both physical and emotional healing.

Depending on how fast your limb heals, you may:

- Have your stitches or staples removed about three to four weeks after surgery.
- Begin physical therapy before getting a prosthesis to build upper-body strength and keep good movement in your hips and knees.
- Start gentle exercises to get used to touch and pressure on your limb.
- Begin wearing a shaping sleeve (compression therapy) to help shape and protect the limb.
- Meet with your prosthetist for a detailed evaluation and discussion.

Month 1-3 — Learning to walk and move again

Getting your first prosthesis

Once your wound has healed enough, you will work closely with your prosthetist. Depending on your prosthetist, this process often includes:

1. Making a test or "diagnostic" socket. This may take one visit or several visits to ensure comfort and proper fit.
2. Talking with your prosthetist about prosthetic parts that match your needs and abilities.
3. Building and aligning your first prosthesis using the test socket and selected components.
4. Making adjustments as your body changes and you get used to wearing the prosthesis. This is very common in the first few months.





After you receive your first prosthesis, you will usually see a physical therapist often. They will help you build strength, balance and healthy movement habits as you learn to walk with your prosthesis. Recovery is a gradual process. Take it one step at a time and remember that progress – no matter how small – still counts.

Month 3-6 Getting back to daily life

Adapting and adjusting

As you use your prosthesis more, your residual limb will keep changing. It often becomes smaller over time. If your recovery has been going well, your routine may have changed and progressed:

- You may see your prosthetist once a month or every two months.
- You may need a new socket because your limb has shrunk and the original test socket feels too loose.
- You may go through another test fitting before getting a smaller socket. This can take a few visits.
- Each new socket may feel different at first. It can take time to get used to it, and small adjustments are common.

Month 6-9 Getting back to daily life

Your long-term prosthesis

By this time, your residual limb may have stopped shrinking. Your doctor or prosthetist may recommend fitting you with a long-term prosthesis.

- You may need another test fitting and a few visits before your final socket is made.
- Your prosthetist will choose prosthetic parts that match your current or future activity level, especially if you are more active now than before.
- You may have moved from using support tools (like crutches or a walker) to walking without them.

Some people will continue to use a walking aid for safety. This depends on health, confidence and comfort. Using an assistive device can help prevent falls, and for many people, that is a positive and helpful choice.

Month 9-12 Living with limb loss

As you reach one year after your amputation, you may feel more settled and confident in daily life.

- You may feel comfortable putting on and taking off your prosthesis and knowing how many socks to wear for the right fit.
- Phantom pain may have eased, and phantom sensations may feel less strong or easier to manage.
- You may be able to do many of the same daily activities you did before, sometimes in new or different ways.
- You will likely have built a strong relationship with your prosthetist, whom you will continue to see regularly.

Wound Healing and Preparing for a Prosthesis

After an amputation, care focuses on two main goals:

- Helping the wound heal properly
- Getting the residual limb ready for a prosthesis

Wound Care

Immediately after surgery, the priority is to support wound healing and protect the residual limb. Your surgeon and healthcare team will guide your post-operative wound care.

In some cases, a removable rigid dressing may be used to protect the residual limb. Depending on your individual needs, this type of dressing may help to:

- Protect the residual limb from accidental injury
- Manage swelling
- Support wound healing
- Help manage post-operative pain

Your healthcare team will determine the most appropriate wound care and dressing for you.

Shaping of Your Limb

Once your surgical team is satisfied with your healing, the next stage of rehabilitation may include working with a prosthetist and beginning residual limb management.

When appropriate, compression therapy may be introduced to help manage swelling and support the shaping of your residual limb in preparation for prosthetic fitting. This may involve elastic compression bandaging, a compression garment or, in some cases, a post-operative silicone liner such as Iceross®.

If a silicone liner is recommended, your prosthetist or healthcare team will guide you on when to begin wearing it and how to gradually increase your wearing time. This will depend on your healing, skin condition and individual rehabilitation needs.

Always follow the guidance of your healthcare team when using compression or a post-operative liner.



Iceross Post-Op Liner

Medical Terms

Desensitisation: Getting your skin used to touch

Scar Mobilisation: Scar rubbing intended to loosen the scar tissue

Contractures: Muscle tightening and stiffness

Amputee Board: A leg rest board for your wheelchair

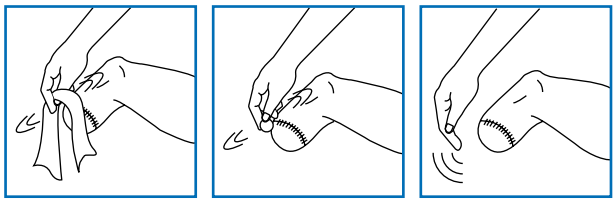


Getting the Skin on Your Limb Used to Touch

After surgery, the skin on your residual limb may feel very sensitive. Later, when you start wearing a prosthesis, this skin will feel pressure it is not used to feeling. Desensitising helps your skin adjust to these new feelings and may also help reduce phantom pain. You can try the following:

- Start with very light touching or tapping, then slowly move on to gentle massage.
- As it becomes more comfortable, slowly increase the pressure.
- Rub the skin with different textures. Begin with something soft (like a cotton ball) using small circular motions. Later, you can try rougher items like paper towels or soft brushes.
- Aim to do this for 15 to 20 minutes, three times a day, until the skin feels less sensitive.

Be very careful around areas with stitches. Avoid rubbing directly over sutures until your healthcare team says it is safe.



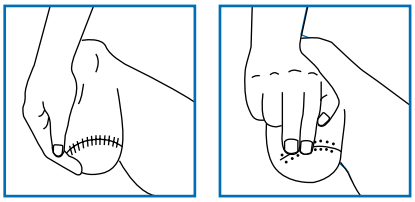
Loosening the Area of Your Scar

As your body heals, scar tissue may stick to the tissue and bone underneath. This can cause pain or skin problems when you wear a prosthesis. Gentle scar movement techniques can help keep the skin flexible and prevent these issues. You may feel some discomfort or pain at first. However, it is important to continue doing this regularly to help reduce pain and improve comfort when you begin walking with your prosthesis.

If you are unsure how or when to start, your healthcare team can guide you and show you safe techniques like the ones below.

- Place two fingers on an area of your residual limb where you can feel bone under the skin. Press firmly and move your fingers in small circles without sliding over the skin. This helps loosen the skin from the tissue underneath.
- Repeat this around all the bony areas of your residual limb.
- Try to do this for 15 to 20 minutes, three times a day, until you are moving more comfortably.

Only use this procedure once your scar has healed. Do not massage the sutured area and unhealed scar tissue.



These are general tips, and everyone is different. Always follow the advice of your healthcare provider. If you feel pain, discomfort, or have questions, contact them for guidance.

Positioning Your Residual Limb

After a leg amputation, correct positioning is very important. It helps prevent muscle tightening (contractures), keeps your joints moving well and supports healthy blood flow.

Keep Your Limb Straight

Try not to keep your residual limb bent for long periods. When the hip or knee stays bent too long, blood flow can be affected which leads to muscle tightening.

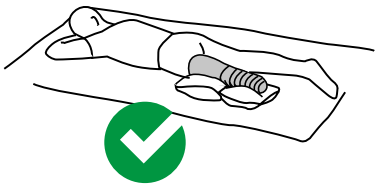


For Below-Knee Amputations

- When sitting, support your residual limb and keep your knee straight.
- In a wheelchair, use an amputee board if available.
- When sitting in a regular chair, place your limb on a second chair of the same height.

For Both Below-Knee and Above-Knee Amputations

- Lying flat on your stomach helps stretch the muscles at the front of your hips. This can reduce the stiffness (contractures) caused by sitting too long. Try this position for 15 to 20 minutes, several times a day.



Elevating Your Limb

- Raising your residual limb can help reduce pain and swelling.
- Make sure your limb stays straight when elevated, especially when resting it on pillows or cushions, which can cause it to bend without you noticing.



Helpful Tip!

A piece of foam cut to the right size and shape can support your limb while keeping it straight.

Avoid Bending Your Limb By:

- Letting it rest on a crutch handle
- Hanging it over the edge of a bed
- Sitting on a bed with your knee bent for long periods





Good positioning may take some practice, but it plays an important role in your recovery and long-term comfort.

As soon as your surgeon says it is safe, a physiotherapist will help you start moving again with special exercises. These exercises are meant to help your body get stronger and more flexible. You should keep doing them until you are ready for your first prosthetic leg fitting.

Starting movement early is very important. Studies show that people who begin mobilising sooner often recover faster.

At this stage, your residual limb is usually still being shaped. This may be done with compression bandages or post-operative silicone liners, guided by your prosthetist. Your care team will watch your progress closely and help decide when you are ready for the next phase of recovery. Once your wound has healed and you are ready for a prosthesis, your prosthetist becomes a key part of your long-term care. A prosthetist plays an important role in helping you stay mobile and active for many years to come.

You have the right to choose and to change your prosthetist. You do not have to work with any one specific medical practitioner.



Tips for Choosing a Prosthetist

Choosing a prosthetist is one of the most important decisions you need to make. You may want to continue with the prosthetist who has been treating you up to now, but you may also like to consider another prosthetist. Everyone is different, and it's important to work with someone who understands you and meets your needs. Remember, your prosthetist wants the best outcome for you too. Sometimes that may even mean helping you find another prosthetist who is a better match. Advocating for yourself is an important part of your care, and it's okay to do what feels right for you. The following are some things to consider when choosing a prosthetist.

Medical or Peer Referrals

A good place to start is asking for recommendations from your doctors, therapists, or nurses. It can also be very helpful to talk to other people who have lost a limb and ask about their experiences. Choosing the right prosthetist can take time, and that's okay. Finding someone you trust and feel comfortable with is an important part of your recovery and long-term care.

Online Information

Websites and social media can also help you learn more about prosthetists in your area and the services they offer. Many clinics share helpful information online that can give you a better sense of their approach and experience.

Prosthetic Experience

Like any profession, prosthetists have different levels of experience and areas of focus. It is a good idea to ask about their experience working with people who have needs similar to yours. Pay attention to how easy it is to have this conversation. If it feels hard to get clear answers or communicate openly, that could be a sign that this prosthetist may not be the best fit for you. Experience does not depend on age alone. People follow many different career paths, so what matters most is their skills, knowledge, and ability to work with you as a partner in your care.

Q: Are you experienced in making prostheses for people with needs like mine?

Communication Skills and Personal Rapport

Good communication is very important. A prosthetist should listen to you, understand your goals and concerns and answer your questions clearly. They should explain each step of the process and let you know what to expect. Since you may work with your prosthetist for a long time, trust and open communication are key. Feeling heard and understood helps build a strong, positive relationship.









Knowledge of New Technology

It is helpful if your prosthetist stays up to date with the latest prosthetic technology. Many advanced prosthetic devices require extra training and certification from the manufacturer. Ask if your prosthetist is certified to work with the type of prosthesis you may use. This shows they have learned how to safely and correctly use their latest technology.

Treatment Facility

Well-equipped clinics can support high-quality care. While you may not recognise all the equipment, your overall impression of the space matters. Also think about location. Prostheses need check-ups, adjustments and repairs from time to time. Choosing a clinic that is easy to reach can make ongoing care much simpler.

Rehabilitation Team and Support

Recovery works best when your healthcare providers work together. A prosthetist who connects with physiotherapists, biokineticists, or other specialists can help support your full recovery. Some prosthetists can also refer you to helpful resources, such as support groups, counselors, or sports programs for people with limb loss.

Q: Do you work alone or as part of a team with other healthcare specialists such as physiotherapists and biokineticists?

First Evaluation Visit

Once you are ready to choose a prosthetist, you should book an evaluation appointment. It is a good idea to meet with more than one prosthetist before deciding who feels right for you.

During this visit, the prosthetist will:

- Check your overall health
- Examine your residual limb
- Make sure your skin has healed enough to handle a prosthesis

They will also ask about your daily life and needs, such as:

- Do you work at a desk, or is your job more physical?
- Do you mostly walk indoors or outdoors?
- Are your home and workplace flat, or do they have hills or slopes?
- Do you use stairs often?

Your answers help the prosthetist choose the right parts for your prosthesis. Some options focus on safety and comfort, while others support higher activity. Using all this information, the prosthetist will recommend a prosthetic design that fits your needs and goals.

Choosing the right prosthetist can take some time – and that's okay. Finding someone who listens, communicates well, and supports your journey is an important part of moving forward.



Understanding and Adapting to Your Prosthetic Leg

For most people, getting a prosthesis sooner can help shorten the overall recovery time. Once you have chosen a prosthetist, there is a general process for designing and making your prosthetic leg. Your experience may vary, but the steps below explain what usually happens.

The Process of Making Your Prosthetic Leg



Designing Your Prosthetic Leg

A well-designed prosthesis should help you move as naturally and comfortably as possible. Every prosthetist has their own fitting style and methods, but a good prosthetist stays up to date with new technology and takes time to understand your needs.

Many things are considered when fitting a prosthesis. You and your prosthetist will talk about different parts and options. Your comfort, goals, daily activities, and preferences all matter. It is important to ask questions, keep an open mind, and take time before making final decisions.

The main goal of this phase is to help you regain mobility and become as independent as possible, in ways that work for your life.

Medical Terms

Diagnostic Socket: A trial leg that allows for test fitting

Static Alignment: Setting up how the leg sits

Gait Training: Learning to walk again

Your prosthetist can help you understand which prosthetics and accessories are a good match for your body, your health, and your daily activities. It is best to focus on finding what helps you feel comfortable, safe, and confident – rather than focusing on a specific product. The goal is to find the best outcome for you and your life.



Building Your Prosthetic Leg

Making a prosthesis is both a science and an art. A good fit and alignment can greatly affect comfort, confidence and how well you move. Two things are especially important:

- A socket that fits your residual limb well and holds the prosthesis securely
- Proper alignment of all prosthetic parts so movement feels balanced and safe

Designing and Making the Socket

One of the most important steps is getting the exact shape of your residual limb. This helps the prosthetist make a socket that fits well and supports your body properly.

A good prosthetist takes great care to make sure your socket fits your residual limb well and that all the parts are lined up correctly.

You can think of this step as making a “blueprint” of your residual limb. Because the socket is how the prosthesis connects to your body, it needs to be very accurate. This can be challenging, since skin and soft tissue can shift when pressure is applied. That is why working with an experienced and patient prosthetist and clinic can make a big difference in your comfort and success.

It also helps when the residual limb is shaped well, because that makes it easier to design a comfortable socket. That is why proper care right after surgery, during the wound-healing phase, is so important.

How the Socket Shape Is Captured

There are different ways to capture the shape of your limb, such as:

- Using a plaster cast
- Using air-pressure casting systems
- Using digital scanners

The most common method uses plaster. Your prosthetist will apply plaster to your limb, take measurements and remove it after a few minutes. Any plaster left on your skin can be washed off easily with water. The most helpful thing you can do during this process is to try to relax. Tense muscles can change the shape of the cast and affect how well the socket fits.

Fitting Your Diagnostic (Test) Socket

Using the shape taken from your cast, your prosthetist will make a diagnostic, or test socket. This socket is used to check how well the shape fits your residual limb and how comfortable it feels. The test socket is usually ready at your next appointment, since it takes time to make and adjust. The socket is made from clear plastic so the prosthetist can see how your limb fits inside. It is also adjustable, which allows changes to be made before the final socket is created.



Helpful Tip!

Wear comfortable clothing to this appointment. Ask your prosthetist to explain their fitting process and let you know how you can help make the visit go smoothly.

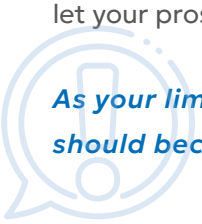
Assembling and Aligning Your Prosthesis

Once you and your prosthetist are happy with the socket fit and comfort, the rest of the prosthetic parts are added. These parts are carefully lined up while you are standing. This step is called static alignment. If the prosthesis feels stable and comfortable, you may be able to take your very first steps soon. This can be an exciting milestone!

Learning to Walk

Your first steps with a prosthesis are just the beginning of learning. Some people find walking comes quickly, but most find that it takes some time. Both experiences are normal, there is no need to rush. Use this stage to learn how your prosthetic leg works and how your body moves with it. Ask questions and share how things feel. This helps your care team support you better.

To walk well and use less energy, you will need gait training. The higher the level of amputation, the more complex walking can be, because more joints and prosthetic parts are involved. Regaining independence takes effort, regular practice and patience. It is also normal to feel some pain or discomfort during the early months but be sure to let your prosthetist know.



As your limb continues to heal, walking should become more comfortable.



Starting gait training early, with close support from a physiotherapist, biokineticist, and/or prosthetist, is very important. This helps you learn how to walk in the safest and most comfortable way possible. Walking with a prosthesis means learning new movement skills, and it is much easier to build good habits at the start than try to fix poor habits later.

Your physiotherapist or biokineticist, working together with your prosthetist, will teach you exercises that strengthen the muscles you need for walking with your prosthetic leg. These exercises are chosen especially for you and your level of amputation. You will see example exercises in this guide, but these are only general suggestions. They may not be right for everyone.

Always follow the advice of your own healthcare team, because they understand your body and recovery best.

Fitting Your Final Prosthesis

Over time, your residual limb will continue to heal and change shape. This happens for several reasons:

- Changes in body fluid
- Muscle shrinkage (atrophy) because the limb is used differently
- Weight gain or weight loss
- Changes in muscle strength

As you walk more, you may rebuild some muscle and return closer to your usual weight. Because of these changes, the socket may eventually stop fitting well.

A socket that does not fit properly can feel loose, use more energy, cause discomfort, or increase the risk of falls. Sometimes this can be helped for a short time by wearing extra socks. However, a new socket will eventually be needed.
This process may happen more than once until your limb shape becomes stable. Once things settle, a long-term socket can be made.



The Importance of Specialist Support

A physiotherapist or biokineticist who has experience working with people with limb loss can make a big difference in your recovery. Prosthetic joints, such as knees, work in different ways. A skilled specialist can teach you safe techniques for activities like walking down the stairs, based on the type of prosthesis you use. It is important to ask for referral to a gait-training specialist. Learning how to move well is a key part of returning to daily life.

Follow-up and Ongoing Care

Even though a long-term socket lasts longer than early temporary sockets, you will still need new sockets over time. Your body continues to change, and prosthetic parts also wear out.

There is no true “final” prosthetic leg. Adjustments and replacements are a normal part of living with a prosthesis. Many people need a new socket about every three years, with smaller changes in between. This timeline varies from person to person. A comfortable, well-fitting socket is one of the most important parts of your prosthesis and should always be a top priority.

Think of visits to your prosthetist like regular dental checkups. Try to schedule a visit about every six months to check that everything is working well. These regular check ins can help catch small issues early and prevent bigger problems later.

Helpful Tip!

Create a maintenance plan for your prosthetic leg. Talk with your prosthetist about what they will take care of and what you can do yourself. Looking after your prosthesis helps it last longer, keeps you safer, and can save you money over time.

About Prosthetic Legs

Prosthetic legs have improved a lot in recent years. Thanks to modern technology, Paralympic athletes and many determined people around the world living with limb loss are discovering that they can live full, active and meaningful lives. Achievements that once seemed impossible are now becoming real.

Today, there are many different parts that can be used to build a prosthetic leg. These range from simple mechanical options to advanced bionic devices that use sensors and computers to adjust to how you walk and adapt to the ground.

Groundbreaking scientific progress has been made in prosthetic components in recent years. Wonderful innovations have been introduced in the pursuit of a life without limitations, pushing the boundaries of what was previously believed impossible. People are now presented with more information and more choice than ever before. Naturally this leads to questions such as: "What's the best prosthetic leg?"

– Ernst van Dyk, bilateral amputee

What Is the Right Prosthetic Leg for You?

There is no single "best" prosthetic leg for everyone. One size does not fit all; each person is different. People have different body shapes, health needs, amputation levels and lifestyles. Because of this, the best prosthesis is the one that fits you and your daily life.

Your care team considers your overall situation, including your health, activity level, and personal goals, before recommending a prosthetic design. It's important to remember that what works well for one person may not work the same way for another. You may hear about a prosthesis that works well for someone else and wonder whether it would be a good fit for you too. That's a completely natural thought. However, choosing the right prosthesis can make the difference between continuing to enjoy the activities you love and having to make significant adjustments to your lifestyle.

Parts of a Good Prosthetic Leg

Two things matter most for a prosthetic leg to work well:

- A comfortable socket design that fits your residual limb securely and safely
- The proper alignment of all the prosthetic parts so they work smoothly together

The best prosthetic leg is not about one single part. ALL components – from the foot to the socket – need to work together as a complete system. Focusing on just one part (like a knee or foot) and expecting it to solve everything can lead to frustration.

The best prosthetic leg for you is one that:

- Matches your personal needs
- Works as a complete, well-balanced system
- Helps you move as closely as possible to how you did before

Bionic Technology

Some modern prosthetic legs use bionic technology. These devices include small computers, sensors, and batteries that help the prosthesis respond to how you move. They can adjust to your walking speed, to your balance and even to the surface on which you are walking.

Bionic technology is always improving, and it has opened new possibilities for comfort, safety and movement. While not everyone needs or benefits from these devices, they are an exciting option for some people. Your prosthetist can help you understand which technologies may be right for you and explain the benefits and limits of each option.

Össur Navii is a fully waterproof prosthetic knee made to keep up with everyday life. It is designed to help you move safely and comfortably whether you are walking, standing, or going down steps. Navii works in many environments, so you don't have to worry about rain or wet conditions. It also has removable protective covers that come in five different colors. You can change them to match your activity, outfit, or mood for the day.

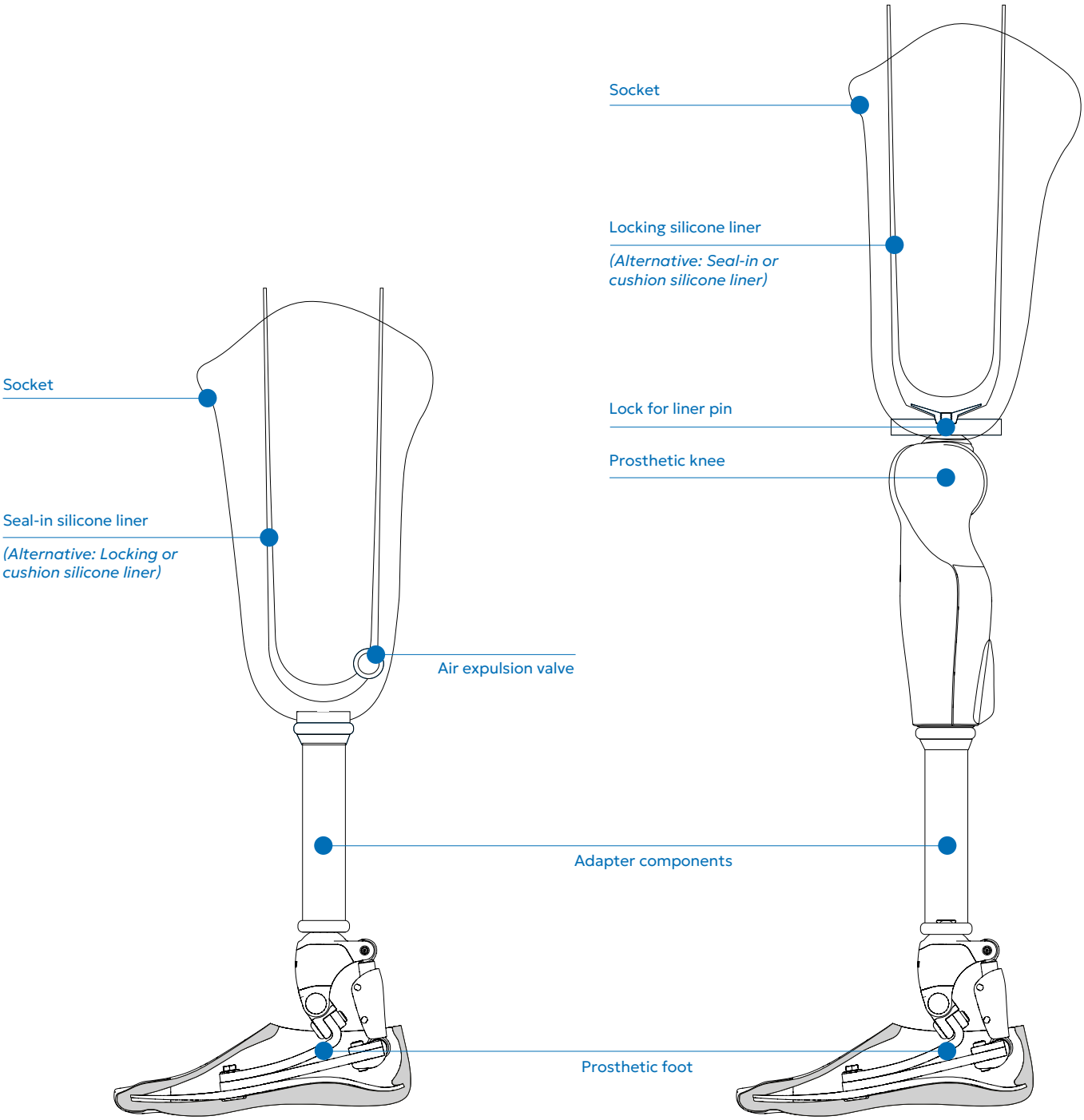
Össur Rheo Knee is designed to adjust as you move. It "learns" how you walk by monitoring your steps and adapting its response. This helps improve safety and can make walking feel more natural. Because the knee adjusts for you, it can reduce the mental and physical effort needed to move and may help lessen strain on other parts of your body.

Össur Power Knee uses battery-powered technology to help move the prosthesis, similar to how muscles work in the body. This added power supports movement and helps with activities like walking and standing up. The goal is to provide smoother, more supported movement for people who may benefit from extra assistance.





Prosthetic Leg Diagrams



BELOW-THE-KNEE PROSTHESIS

ABOVE-THE-KNEE PROSTHESIS

Prosthetic Leg Sockets

The All-Important Socket

Even with today's advanced prosthetic knees, feet, and materials, one thing matters most for how well a prosthetic leg works – the socket fit. The socket is the part of the prosthesis that connects directly to your residual limb. It acts like a firm shell that holds your limb and links it to the rest of the prosthetic leg.

After amputation, your residual limb is asked to do something new – support your body weight and help control movement while walking. Because of this, the socket must fit very well. A good socket helps you feel stable, comfortable, and in control. In fact, it's hard to imagine anything you wear that needs to fit as well as a prosthetic socket.

Every prosthetic leg starts with a socket that is designed just for you. If the socket does not fit comfortably, if it does not stay on securely, or if the prosthetic parts are not lined up correctly, even the most advanced technology will not work as well as it should.

Designing and making a good socket is one of the hardest parts of a prosthetist's job. Skilled prosthetists work constantly to improve their methods and skills so they can create sockets that fit as accurately and comfortably as possible.

Socket, Liner and Suspension: Working Together

The socket, the liner (the soft layer between your skin and the socket), and the suspension system (what holds the prosthesis on your body) all work together. These parts must be chosen carefully because they affect one another.

For example, a soft liner can help protect your skin and may also help hold the prosthesis in place. Some socket designs work better with certain suspension systems than others. Thinking about all these parts together increases the chance of creating a prosthesis that feels comfortable and works well for you.

The Importance of Clear and Honest Communication

Your residual limb will change shape over time as your body heals and adjusts. Because of this, your prosthetist may need to make and adjust several sockets over time. Clear and honest communication is very important during this process. Your prosthetist relies on what they see and what you tell them to make sure your socket fits well and feels right. Always tell your prosthetist if you feel:

- Poking or pinching
- Too much pressure
- Skin irritation or breakdown
- Pain or soreness

At first, it may be hard to explain exactly how the socket feels, or you may worry that giving honest feedback is not polite. These feelings are very normal. Still, it is important to speak up so your prosthetist can help you. Sharing how you feel helps your prosthetist make changes that improve comfort, safety, and your ability to move with confidence.

Your prosthesis should feel secure and comfortable. If it hurts, tell your prosthetist.

What Makes a Good Socket?

A Snug and Comfortable Fit: Walking in a natural way depends first on how well your socket fits. The socket needs to fit snugly and comfortably. If the fit is not right, it can quickly cause pain, skin problems, injuries, and trouble walking.

A good socket fits closely to your residual limb without causing pain, touches the whole surface of the limb (not just one small area) and spreads pressure evenly across the skin. It may include a soft, flexible inner lining to add comfort and cushioning and has a smooth outer surface so it fits under clothing and does not rub against your other leg.

Prosthesis Control and Function:
To control your prosthetic leg well, the socket must fit securely. A secure fit helps prevent the prosthesis from feeling loose or moving in ways it shouldn't. It should not slide up and down inside the socket, shift side to side, or twist or rotate. If the limb moves inside the socket, it can be harder to place your foot where you want it. This can affect balance, make walking more tiring, and raise the risk of injury. A well-fitting socket helps improve balance, reduce effort and discomfort, make the prosthetic leg feel lighter and increase confidence while moving.



Prosthetic Liners

The Silicone Liner

Most people with limb loss wear a soft silicone liner between their skin and the socket. The liner rolls onto your residual limb and works closely with the socket. Choosing the right liner is often one of the first steps your prosthetist takes when designing your prosthesis.

Together, the liner and socket form the interface between your body and the prosthetic leg. The liner has two main jobs:

- To help hold the prosthesis securely on your body
- To protect your skin from rubbing, pressure, and friction inside the hard socket

Three Ways a Silicone Liner Helps Hold on the Prosthesis

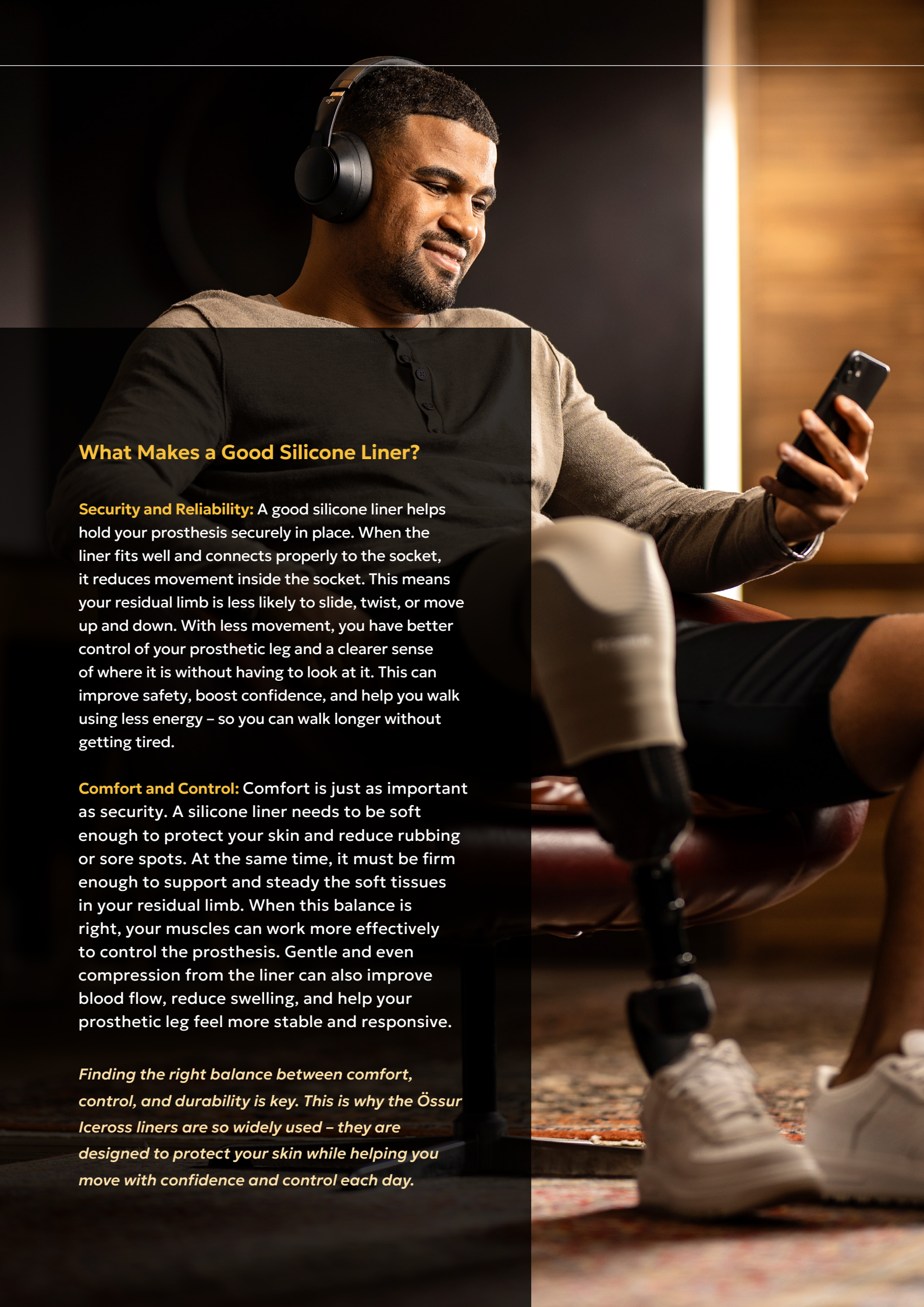
- Locking liner: The traditional method where a liner has a pin at the end that clicks into a lock in the bottom of the socket to hold the prosthesis in place.
- Cushion liner with sleeve: An extra sleeve goes over the liner and socket. An air valve removes air to help secure the fit.
- Seal-In suction liner: Special seals on the liner create an airtight seal inside the socket. This forms suction that helps keep the prosthesis firmly in place.

Hybrid Liner

Hybrid liners, such as the Össur Iceross Seal-In X Locking, combine two helpful systems into one. They use both a locking system and a vacuum (Seal-In) system. This gives a strong, secure connection between your residual limb and your prosthetic leg. Some hybrid systems use a locking pin and a seal, while others use a locking strap and a seal. Together, these features help improve stability, comfort and control.

The silicone liner and the socket work very closely together. Getting this part right is extremely important. When the liner and socket fit and function well, the rest of the prosthesis – such as the knee and foot – can also work better. A well-matched liner and socket help your prosthetic leg feel more comfortable, secure and easier to use every day.





What Makes a Good Silicone Liner?

Security and Reliability: A good silicone liner helps hold your prosthesis securely in place. When the liner fits well and connects properly to the socket, it reduces movement inside the socket. This means your residual limb is less likely to slide, twist, or move up and down. With less movement, you have better control of your prosthetic leg and a clearer sense of where it is without having to look at it. This can improve safety, boost confidence, and help you walk using less energy – so you can walk longer without getting tired.

Comfort and Control: Comfort is just as important as security. A silicone liner needs to be soft enough to protect your skin and reduce rubbing or sore spots. At the same time, it must be firm enough to support and steady the soft tissues in your residual limb. When this balance is right, your muscles can work more effectively to control the prosthesis. Gentle and even compression from the liner can also improve blood flow, reduce swelling, and help your prosthetic leg feel more stable and responsive.

Finding the right balance between comfort, control, and durability is key. This is why the Össur Iceross liners are so widely used – they are designed to protect your skin while helping you move with confidence and control each day.

Prosthetic Knees

The Prosthetic Knee

The knee is one of the most complex joints in the human body. Because of this, designing a prosthetic knee that moves and works like a natural knee is a real challenge.

The main goal of a prosthetic knee is to act as much like a real knee as possible by:

- Providing stability, safety, and smooth movement while walking
- Staying stable when standing and when going down steps or stairs
- Allowing enough movement to sit down and, in some cases, kneel

When a prosthetic knee is not the right match, problems can happen. These problems may be sudden, like a fall, or they may build up over time if the person has to walk in an unnatural way. Walking with poor movement can place extra strain on the body and lead to discomfort or injury.

Choosing the right prosthetic knee is an important step. With the right match and good support from your care team, a prosthetic knee can help you move more safely, comfortably, and naturally in everyday life.

It's also important to remember that no single prosthetic part works alone. A prosthetic leg works best when all the parts – socket, liner, knee, and foot – are chosen to work together as one system.









What Makes a Good Prosthetic Knee?

Stability, Safety and Support: Feeling safe is key to moving with confidence. A good prosthetic knee behaves in a predictable way. It needs to stay stable when supporting your body weight and move freely when it's time to swing your leg forward. When your heel touches the ground, your weight shifts from one leg to the other. During this moment, the prosthetic knee must provide enough resistance, so it does not buckle or collapse. It also needs to stay stable as your weight moves forward over the prosthetic foot. If you make an unexpected movement, the knee should react quickly to help keep you safe. A good prosthetic knee also needs to support you during everyday activities like standing still.

Smooth and Symmetric Movement: To walk in a natural way, the prosthetic knee must bend and straighten smoothly as you take each step. This helps your walking look and feel more balanced. When movement is smooth and even, it reduces extra strain on other parts of your body, like your hips, back, or sound leg. A good prosthetic knee can adjust to the way you walk, how fast you move, and the environment around you. This kind of movement support is important for long-term comfort, health, and confidence.

Prosthetic Feet

The Prosthetic Foot

The human foot is very complex. It has 26 bones, 33 joints, and many muscles, ligaments, and tendons. A prosthetic foot cannot copy all of this exactly, but a well-designed prosthetic foot can help you walk in a smooth and natural way. Prosthetic feet are chosen based on your individual needs. Your care team will look at things like your overall health, daily activities, hobbies, home environment, and lifestyle. The goal is to make walking feel as comfortable, safe and natural as possible.

A good prosthetic foot aims to:

- Provide a stable and safe base for standing and walking
- Support a natural walking motion from heel to toe
- Store and return energy to help replace lost muscle power
- Reduce shock and twisting forces that would normally be absorbed by the ankle and foot

Your prosthetist will help you choose a prosthetic foot that works well with your socket, knee, and overall needs. When all parts of the prosthetic leg work together, moving through daily life can feel more comfortable, stable and natural.







What Makes a Good Prosthetic Foot?

A Safe and Stable Base: The prosthetic foot connects your leg to the ground, so it must be steady and reliable. It should adapt well to different surfaces, such as smooth floors indoors, ramps, slopes and uneven ground outdoors. A stable foot helps you feel safer and more confident as you move.

Natural Walking Motion: One of the main goals of a prosthetic leg is to help you walk as naturally and evenly as possible. Walking in a smooth, balanced way helps protect your other joints and muscles. When the prosthetic foot supports good movement, it reduces extra strain that could lead to pain or injury over time.

Predictable Energy Return: In a natural foot, muscles help push the body forward with each step. A prosthetic foot helps replace some of that power by storing energy when you step down and giving it back as you move forward. When this energy return is smooth and predictable, walking feels easier and less tiring, helping you go farther with more confidence.

Protecting from Shock and Twisting Forces: Each time your heel hits the ground, your body absorbs impact and twisting forces. A good prosthetic foot helps absorb these forces instead of passing them on to your residual limb, knee, hips, or back. This protection can reduce discomfort now and help prevent long-term problems later.



Prosthetic Leg Components

Prosthetic legs are made up of several parts that work together to support movement, comfort and confidence. Each part has a specific role, and your prosthetist helps choose what works best for you and your lifestyle.

Adapters

Adapters are the parts that connect the main pieces of a prosthetic leg, such as the socket, knee and foot. Some adapters are simple straight pieces, while others allow small adjustments to improve alignment and comfort. These adjustments can make a big difference in how natural and balanced walking feels.

Limb Coverings

A lifelike covering (called a cosmesis) can be placed over the prosthetic leg. It is often made from materials like silicone or PVC and is designed to look like a real limb. Some covers can include details like skin tone, veins, freckles, hair, or even tattoos. Some are pre-made, while others are custom created by a prosthetist who specialises in this work. The importance of how a prosthesis looks is different for everyone. When choosing a cosmesis, it helps to think about appearance along with cost, maintenance, and how it may affect movement and function.

Specialised Prosthesis

Even with today's advanced technology, no single prosthesis works perfectly for every activity. The human body can do so many different things, and some activities need special equipment.

Many people can use one prosthesis for daily life and light activities, which is more possible today than ever before. However, some activities – like sprinting, long-distance running, or swimming – are easier and more enjoyable with a specialised prosthesis made just for that purpose. For example:

- Running and sprinting: While some everyday prostheses can be used for jogging, people who run often may benefit from sports-specific parts, such as the Össur Cheetah Blade, which is designed for speed and performance.
- Mixed activities: Prosthetic feet like the Össur Cheetah Xplore are designed for everyday use but can also support a variety of sports and outdoor activities.
- Swimming: Most prosthetic legs do not help with swimming and may feel heavy in the water. For swimming or snorkeling, a sport-specific device can make the activity easier and more comfortable.

The right combination of components depends on your goals, activities and comfort. Your prosthetist can help you explore options and decide what supports your everyday life – and the activities you enjoy most.

Medical Terms

Cosmesis: A lifelike covering for the prosthetic leg.



Caring for Yourself

Even though many healthcare professionals may help you during recovery, taking care of your own health is very important. Below are general tips to help you care for your residual limb after you receive a prosthesis. Everyone is different, so always follow the advice of your healthcare provider. If you feel pain, discomfort, or have questions, contact them right away.

Checking Your Limb

Skin problems can make wearing your prosthesis uncomfortable or even impossible. Checking your residual limb often helps catch problems early, before they get worse.

- Use a mirror to look at your residual limb from all sides.
- At first, check your limb every time you remove your prosthesis or change a dressing.
- Later, once things are more settled, checking once a day after washing your limb is usually enough.



If your amputation was caused by poor circulation or diabetes, checking your residual limb is especially important. Skin problems can heal more slowly and may lead to serious complications (including another amputation) if not treated early.

If you notice redness, irritation, sores, or tender spots, contact your prosthetist or doctor as soon as possible. Even small skin changes or lesions can be important. Also pay attention to areas that feel sore or bruised under the skin.

Checking the Socket–Liner Interface

The socket-liner interface is the most important part of the prosthesis – it attaches the prosthetic leg to your residual limb – so it is very important to take proper care of it.

– Ernst van Dyk - bilateral amputee



Daily Cleaning of the Socket

Keeping your socket clean is an important part of caring for your prosthesis and your skin.

- It is best to clean your socket before bedtime so your prosthesis has time to fully dry overnight.
- Clean the socket every day using the cleaning solution your prosthetist recommends.
- Use a cloth that is only slightly damp with the cleaning solution. Wipe the inside of the socket gently. Avoid using too much water so it does not soak into the prosthetic parts.
- After the socket is dry, place a small amount of rubbing alcohol on a paper towel and wipe the inside of the socket well.
- Before putting your prosthesis back on, make sure all the alcohol has fully dried.

A clean, dry socket helps protect your skin and helps your residual limb fit snugly and comfortably.

Care for Your Emotional Health

Taking care of your emotional wellbeing is an important part of recovery and adjusting to life after limb loss. You may experience a range of emotions as you recover from surgery and adapt to changes in your daily life. Everyone responds differently, and there is no single way you should feel.

Talking with family, friends, spiritual or faith-based support, peer groups or others who have experienced limb loss may be helpful.
A psychologist, counsellor or other qualified mental health professional can also provide additional support if you need it.

Remember that support is available, even if it looks different for different people. Some people rely on family and friends, while others may find support through healthcare professionals, peer groups, community organisations, or trusted services. Your healthcare team can help connect you with the resources, professional support, and community networks that best meet your needs as they change over time.

Connect with the Össur Community

You can also find Össur on social media, where we share educational resources, practical information and stories from people living with limb loss. Through our online community, you can hear from prosthetic users as they share their own experiences, perspectives and practical learnings about everyday life with prosthetics.

Through technology, education and community stories, Össur aims to provide useful information, encouragement and opportunities to learn from the experiences of others.

The Importance of Weight Control

During rehabilitation and throughout your life with a prosthesis, it is important to eat well and keep your weight as stable as possible. Maintaining a healthy weight is important for everyone, but it is especially important after limb loss because it helps:

- Keep your prosthetic socket fitting properly
- Reduce how much energy it takes to walk with your prosthesis
- Prevent or lessen issues like back pain
- Help manage conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure

By maintaining a healthy, stable body weight you will have less need for adjustments to your socket, and apart from walking more comfortably and improving your quality of life, you also won't have to spend as much on regular socket adjustments.

- Prof Wayne Derman - Specialist Sports Medicine and Exercise Physician – Educator - Researcher



Exercises for Above-the-Knee Amputees

These exercises can help improve your strength, balance, and confidence as you learn to walk with a prosthesis. At first, a physiotherapist or biokineticist should watch and guide you to make sure you are doing each exercise safely and correctly. As you progress, you may be able to practice some of them on your own at home. Important: Always do exercises in an area where handrails or other support is available so you can stay safe.

Exercise and training are a very important part of your recovery. Progress may feel slow at first, and that's okay. Regular exercise training can help you learn good walking habits from the start and support your return to daily life.

These exercises are general suggestions. They may not be right for everyone. Always follow the advice of your healthcare team, who understands your specific needs, professionals in your team who have physically assessed you.

1. Side-to-Side Pelvis Shift

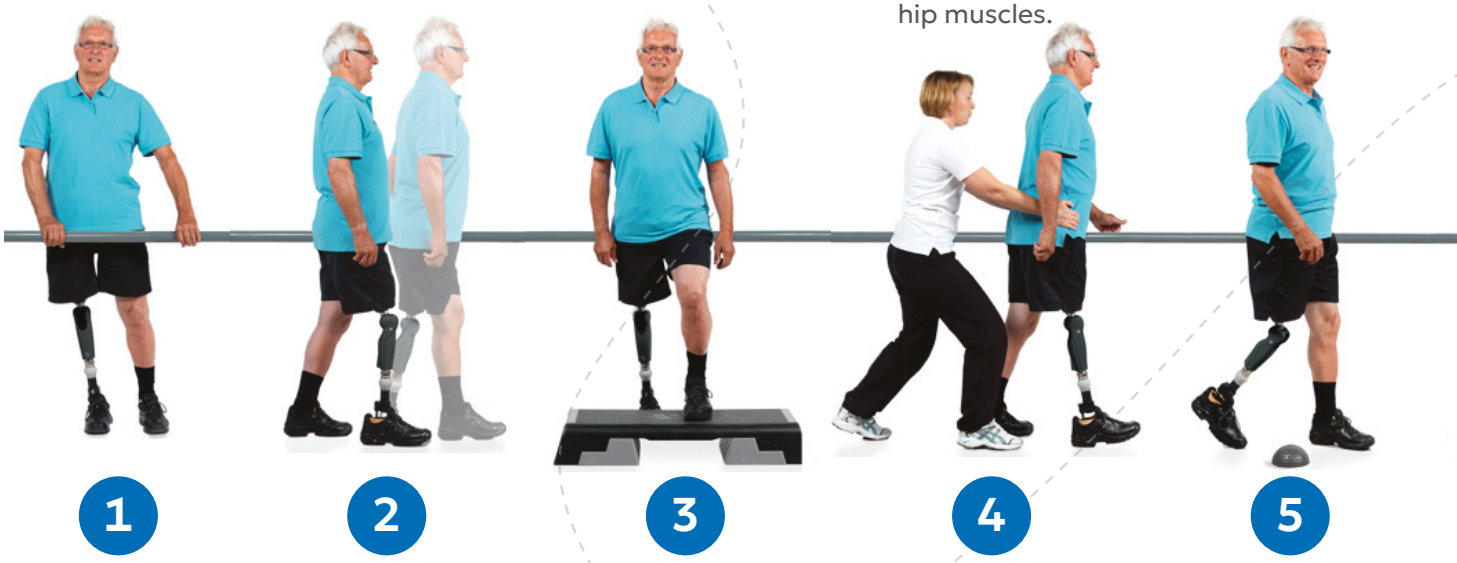
Stand with your feet about 10 cm apart. Slowly shift your weight from one side to the other. You should feel your weight move from one foot to the other. This helps improve balance and body awareness.

2. Stepping Forward

Take a step forward with your sound (non-prosthetic) leg. As you do this, place your weight onto your prosthetic leg. Focus on staying balanced as you step forward and then return to standing.

3. Stepping Up

With both feet on the ground, gently shift your weight onto your prosthetic leg. Push your residual limb into the socket and step up with your sound leg. Try to feel your full weight supported by the prosthetic knee while keeping your balance using your hip muscles.



4. Walking

Practice walking while your prosthetist or physiotherapist gently supports your pelvis on the prosthetic side. This extra resistance helps build forward movement and encourages a longer, more natural step.

5. Figure-Eight Walking and Turns

Place small markers, like non-breakable cups, on the floor. Walk in a figure-eight pattern or practice gentle turns. Focus on how the prosthetic foot rolls forward and how smoothly the prosthetic knee bends.

6. Walking with Sticks

Using walking sticks can help improve balance and body movement. Focus on putting weight through the prosthetic leg and creating a smooth step forward. This can help you move forward with better control and confidence.

7. Sitting Down

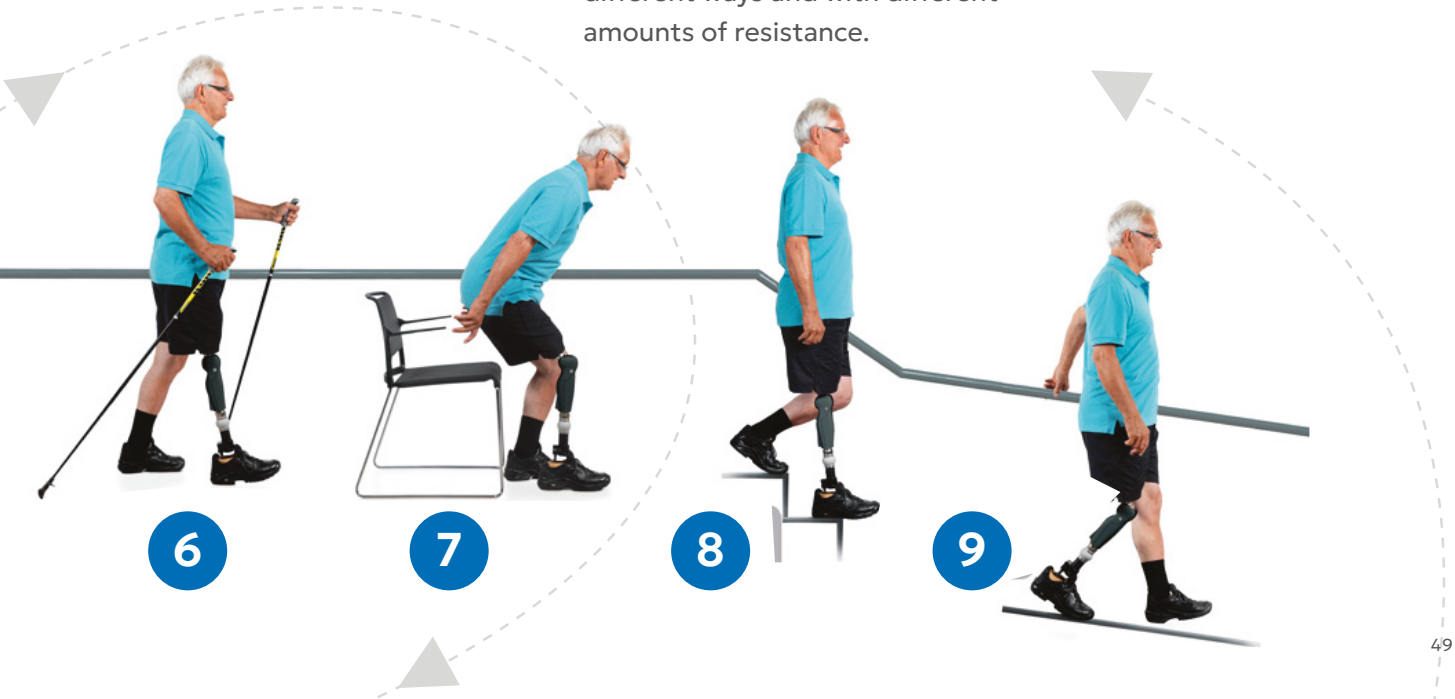
Place your prosthetic foot slightly forward. Shift your weight onto the prosthetic knee and keep it there as you slowly bend the knee to sit down. You should feel resistance – or braking power – which is normal and helps you sit down safely.
Important: Always check with your prosthetist before trying this exercise, as different prosthetic knees work in different ways and with different amounts of resistance.

8. Walking Down the Stairs

Hold onto the handrail(s). Place the back part of the prosthetic foot on the step. Put weight onto the prosthetic side and gently move your pelvis forward. This helps the prosthetic knee support you as you step down safely.

9. Walking Down a Ramp or Slope

Use the handrail(s) and take small, even steps. Putting weight on the prosthetic knee helps control your movement and keeps you stable while going downhill.



Exercises for Below-the-Knee Amputees

These exercises can help improve your strength, balance, and confidence as you learn to walk with a prosthesis. At first, a physiotherapist or biokineticist should watch and guide you to make sure you are doing each exercise safely and correctly. As you progress, you may be able to practice some of them on your own at home.
Important: Always do exercises in an area where handrails or other support are available so you can stay safe.
Exercise and training are a very important part of your recovery. Progress may feel slow at first, and that's okay. Regular exercise training can help you learn good walking habits from the start and support your return to daily life.

These exercises are general suggestions. They may not be right for everyone. Always follow the advice of your healthcare team, who understands your specific needs.





1. Standing

Stand up straight and shift your weight evenly between your prosthetic leg and your sound leg. Using a mirror can help you check your posture and balance.

2. Side-to-Side Weight Shift

Slowly shift your weight onto your prosthetic side. Tighten the muscles around your hip and your residual limb. Then slowly shift your weight back to your sound side. Repeat several times.

3. Forward and Backward Weight Shift

Stand upright with your weight evenly balanced between your prosthetic side and sound side. Slowly lean forward and then backward, keeping control of your balance. When leaning forward, feel how the front of your prosthetic foot touches the ground.

4. Balancing

To make balancing harder, try standing with both feet on a balance board. Step on and off carefully. If needed, have someone nearby for support.

5. Spot-Stepping

Mark three spots on the floor for: one small step, one medium step, and one further away. Put your weight on your prosthetic side and step forward with your sound leg. Step back again. Focus on staying balanced over your prosthesis and taking full, controlled steps.

6. Stepping Up

Shift your weight onto your prosthetic leg. Push your residual limb firmly into the socket and step up with your sound leg. Use the muscles around your knee and hip to stay balanced. Try to keep your pelvis facing forward without twisting or rotating.



7. Tennis Ball Movements

Shift your weight slowly onto your prosthetic side and tighten your residual limb in the socket. Place your sound foot on top of a tennis ball. Move your sound foot in small circles with the ball, then try quicker side-to-side movements.

8. THERABAND® Movements*

Keep your weight on your sound leg. Place a resistance band around your prosthetic foot and attach the other end to a fixed object. Slowly move your prosthetic foot to the side in a straight line, keeping the movement smooth and controlled.

9. Obstacle Stepping

Place small objects (like plastic cups or toys) on the floor at even spaces. Step over each one, lifting your knee up to hip height. Take your time and repeat with each step.

10. Extra Exercises

You can also try walking sideways while crossing one foot over the other, side steps, imaginary tightrope walking, walking backward and taking big, controlled steps.



*THERABAND is a registered trademark of Hygenic Intangible Property Holding Co.

Tips for Everyday Life with Prosthetics

Living with a prosthesis takes practice and patience. With time, routine and support, everyday tasks can become easier and more familiar.

Using a Prosthesis

Q: How do I know when I'm ready to start using a prosthesis?

It depends - after an amputation, your wound and residual limb need time to heal. Many people also use compression therapy to help shape the limb and prepare it for a socket. Once healing has happened, the process of getting a prosthesis can begin. This timing can also depend on other health needs and personal situations. Your healthcare team will help guide you and let you know when the time is right.

Q: Will other people be able to tell that I'm wearing a prosthetic leg?

It depends - many things can affect how noticeable a prosthesis is. This includes your strength, balance, amputation level, and the type of prosthetic parts you use. Physical therapy and gait training can really help. They teach you how to walk more naturally and use your prosthesis in a way that feels comfortable and confident.

Q: How and when do I clean my prosthesis?

It is best to establish a daily cleaning routine. The socket and liner usually need the most daily care. Keeping them clean helps protect your skin and keeps the fit comfortable. Wash the liner with warm water and mild soap. Wipe the inside of the socket with a damp cloth. Regular cleaning helps prevent skin irritation and keeps your prosthesis working well.

Q: What shoes can I wear? Can I change shoes?

It depends – but most shoes can be worn with a prosthetic foot. However, many prosthetic feet are made for a certain heel height. This means your shoes should have a similar heel height for the prosthesis to work properly. If you want to wear shoes with a different heel height, your prosthetist may need to adjust your prosthesis. Some prosthetic feet allow you to change heel height, from barefoot walking to higher heels. There are also options that work well with sandals or flip-flops.

Personal Hygiene

Q: Do I shower with or without my prosthesis?

It is not recommended to shower with a prosthesis in most cases. To shower while wearing a prosthesis, all parts must be waterproof. Many people choose to shower without their prosthesis so they can easily wash their residual limb. For safety, a shower chair or stool is often helpful. Wet floors can be slippery, and standing on one leg may feel unstable.

Q: Do I need to remove my prosthesis when using the toilet?

It depends – usually on the type of amputation and prosthesis you have. People with below-the-knee amputations usually keep their prosthesis on. Those with higher amputations may find it easier to remove it. Comfort can also depend on the socket shape and the height of the toilet seat.

Q: Do I need to wear my prosthesis to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night?

For safety reasons, it is a good idea – it is best to either put on your prosthesis or keep a wheelchair next to the bed for nighttime trips to the bathroom.



Q: How do I take care of the skin on my residual limb?

It is best to establish a daily care routine. Good skin care is very important. Wash your residual limb daily with mild soap, dry it well and apply moisturiser before bed. Taking care of your skin helps prevent irritation and keeps wearing your prosthesis more comfortable.

Socket Fit and Prosthetist Visits

Q: How often will I need to visit my prosthetist?

Every six months, like your dental check-ups, is a good idea. Many people visit their prosthetist because their socket becomes uncomfortable over time. This can happen when the residual limb changes size or shape, or if your body weight changes. Often, the problem can be fixed by adjusting the socket. Sometimes a new socket – or even a new knee, foot, or other part – may be needed. Think of visits to your prosthetist as being like regular dental checkups. Try to schedule a visit about every six months to check that everything is working well. These regular visits can help catch small issues early and prevent bigger problems later. If you are having a problem between your regular visits, don't wait. Contact your prosthetist to see if they should see you sooner.

Q: How often do I need a new socket?

It depends. There is no single answer, because this is different for everyone. In the first year after amputation, your residual limb usually changes a lot as swelling goes down. Because of this, the socket may need to be adjusted or replaced more than once during that first year. After the first year, changes tend to happen more slowly. This usually means fewer socket changes. Other parts of the prosthesis, like the knee or foot, will still wear out over time and may need to be replaced, depending on how active you are and what type of parts you use. Staying in touch with your prosthetist is important. Scheduling check-up visits every six months allows them to check the fit and condition of your prosthesis and make needed adjustments.

Q: How long does it take to get used to a new prosthesis or component?

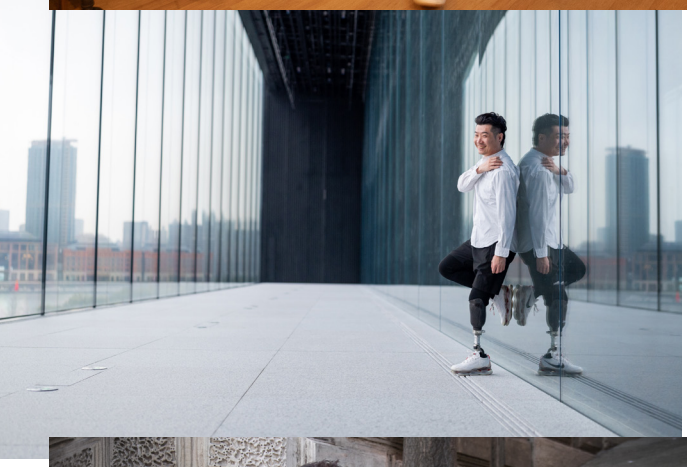
It depends, but getting used to a new prosthetic foot or knee usually doesn't take very long. A new socket may take a few days or up to a week to feel comfortable, since it will likely fit differently than your old one. The same can be true for a new liner. Some people feel comfortable right away, while others need a little time to adjust.

Q: Is it normal for a prosthesis to hurt?

No, a well-fitting prosthetic socket should not hurt. If you feel pain or ongoing discomfort, something is not right. Tell your prosthetist as soon as possible so the socket can be adjusted or remade. Comfort is important for safety, mobility and your overall well-being.

Going Back to Work







Q: Can I return to work after an amputation?

Usually, but it often depends on the type of work you do. Many people want to return to their normal routine, including work, after an amputation. For many jobs, this is possible. Jobs that do not require standing or walking all day may be easier to return to at first. Some people also choose to talk with their employer about adjusting their duties or considering a role that is less physically demanding. Returning to work is a personal journey. With time, communication, and support, many people find a way to balance work and life with a prosthesis that feels right for them.

Q: How do I talk to my employer about my prosthesis?

Being open with your employer about your amputation and prosthesis is usually helpful. It can make it easier for them to understand your situation and support you when needed. This includes understanding that you may occasionally need time away from work for prosthetist visits, adjustments or maintenance.

Q: How do I handle prosthetist appointments during work hours?

Being open with your employer and giving advanced notice is usually helpful. At times, you may need to see your prosthetist during the workday. This is very common. Some people use sick leave or take time off, but many employers are supportive when there is good communication. Letting your employer know ahead of time about these appointments can help make planning easier for everyone.

Travelling

Q: Can I travel by plane with a prosthesis?

Yes, many people with prosthetic legs travel by airplane every day. At airport security, scanners will usually detect the prosthesis, so staff may need to check it. This is routine and should not stop you from flying. One thing to keep in mind: if you take your prosthesis off while sitting on the plane, your residual limb may swell. This can make it harder to put the prosthesis back on before leaving the aircraft. If possible, try to keep it on during the flight.

Q: Will walking in new places feel different?

Yes, it can. Travel often means walking more than usual and on new surfaces, such as uneven sidewalks, slopes, or long airport halls. This can place extra strain on your body, your residual limb, and your other leg. If you travel to a warm or humid place, you may sweat more inside the socket. This can affect how the prosthesis fits. You may need to remove the prosthesis, dry your skin, and put it back on more often to stay comfortable and secure.

Q: What should I pack when travelling with a prosthesis?

Preparing a small “to-go” bag with key items is a good idea. Good skin care and hygiene habits are important even when away from home. It’s a good idea to pack a few important items in your carry-on bag, including skin-care products (like mild soap and moisturiser) in case you need to remove and put back on your prosthesis. Pack extra limb socks and a spare liner, if you have one. Having these items with you can help you stay comfortable and prepared during your trip.

Q: Whom can I contact if I need help while I’m away?

Before you travel, make sure you have your prosthetist’s phone number with you. If something happens to your prosthesis, they can often help by giving advice or connecting you with support nearby. With a little planning, travelling with a prosthesis can be enjoyable and rewarding. Taking care of yourself and knowing who to contact can help you feel confident wherever you go.





Sports and Recreation



Q: Can I take part in sports with a prosthesis?

Yes, many people enjoy sports and recreational activities while using a prosthesis. When you are active, having a socket that fits well is especially important for comfort and safety. Some prosthetic feet are designed to work for everyday walking and light jogging. If you want to do more intense activities, like regular running, your prosthetist may recommend special prosthetic parts made just for sports, such as a running-specific foot or knee.



Q: What if I'm not sure what I am able to do yet?

That's completely okay - many people are unsure at first. In many places around the world and online, there are amputee groups and organisations where you can meet others who have gone through similar experiences. These groups are great places to ask questions, share ideas, and learn about sports, hobbies, work, and daily life. Talking with other amputees can help you see what may be possible over time and give you confidence to try new activities when you feel ready. Take things at your own pace – there's no rush, and every small step counts.





Financial Considerations



Financial Considerations

A practical guide to prosthetic treatment and rehabilitation funding

Starting your journey with a prosthesis can be overwhelming, but understanding funding options can make a big difference. In South Africa, there are several ways prosthetic care may be funded: public healthcare sector, Medical Schemes, Compensation Fund (covering work related injuries), Road Accident Fund and in some cases charitable organisations.

Each funder has its own processes and requirements, so it's helpful to learn what applies to you. You may encounter challenges along the way, but don't let this discourage you–stay engaged, ask questions, and keep following up.

Accessing the right care is important, & persistence often helps you get the support you need.

The cost of a prosthetic leg

As you begin the process of getting a prosthetic leg, it's important to understand how your funding works and what it will cover over time. Ask your funder or care team about the full process for approval and replacement of different parts of your prosthesis—this includes components, liners (which need regular replacement), new sockets (especially as your residual limb changes shape), and eventually a completely new prosthetic leg. Knowing how often these items can be replaced, and what is covered, will help you plan ahead and avoid surprises.

Take your time with your prosthetist to understand holistically the care you will receive. Make sure you feel comfortable and in agreement with the treatment and prescription recommended. Don't hesitate to ask why certain components are suggested, what benefits they offer, and what costs may be involved. When you clearly understand this it is much easier to make informed decisions.

Typically, the cost of a prosthetic leg can be divided into the following three categories:

1. The manufacturing or labour part consists of designing and manufacturing the socket, assembling the components correctly to ensure the complete system works as intended. The more complicated the shape of your residual limb and the more health complications you may have, the more time and expertise will be required to manufacture your prosthesis.

It is not possible to estimate a 'standard price' for this part of the process, because there is no 'standard residual limb'.

2. The cost of all the components, such as the prosthetic foot, which the prosthetist procure from prosthetic device manufacturers such as Össur. The key factor driving costs is the prices of the specific components that the prosthetist recommends for you.

3. Recurring costs: Once you have received your prosthesis and regained your mobility, your prosthesis will have to be adjusted periodically as your residual limb may change shape and volume over time.

Helpful Tip!

By maintaining a healthy, stable body weight you will have less need for adjustments to your socket, and apart from walking more comfortably and improving your quality of life.

This information is provided as a guide only. Check with your insurer or funding provider for the most up-to-date eligibility criteria, benefits, and claim requirements.

Reimbursement Options

A practical guide to prosthetic treatment and rehabilitation funding

Start With The Cause Of Limb Loss

Depending on the cause of the amputation, your prosthesis and prosthetic rehabilitation can be financed through one or more of the following routes.

1. **Medical Aid**
   PMB, prosthetic benefit and possible ex gratia support.

2. **COIDA Funding**
   Work-related injury or occupational disease claims.

3. **Personal Injury Claims**
   Medical negligence, general injury or railway-related claims.

4. **Road Accident Fund**
   Road accidents involving a third party.

5. **Private Funds**
   Savings, credit, family support, donations, sponsorship or fundraising.

6. **Disability Insurance**
   Monthly income or lump-sum policy benefits.

7. **Public Sector**
   Assessment and referral through government clinics and orthotics and prosthetics centres.

How To Use This Guide

Eligibility, benefit limits, tariffs and documentation differ. Involve an experienced prosthetist early and confirm the current requirements with the relevant fund, scheme, insurer or legal adviser.

This information is provided as a guide only. Check with your insurer or funding provider for the most up-to-date eligibility criteria, benefits, and claim requirements.

Medical Aid

A practical guide to prosthetic treatment and rehabilitation funding

1. Medical Aid

If you are a medical aid member, enquire about all benefits available so that you can access the best possible treatment during rehabilitation. Schemes and plan options differ. An experienced prosthetist can guide you through the administration needed for authorisation.

Who May Qualify?

Medical aid members may receive support through:

- Prescribed Minimum Benefits (PMB)
- A prosthetic benefit
- An ex gratia contribution

A. Prescribed Minimum Benefits

PMBs ensure access to certain minimum health services, regardless of the benefit option selected. They include:

- Any emergency medical condition.
- About 270 defined medical conditions, including amputation.
- 25 chronic conditions.

How Does It Work?

Medical aids must adhere to the Medical Schemes Act 131 of 1998. Members, irrespective of scheme and plan type, should qualify for a basic prosthesis.

A patient may lodge a complaint if a scheme does not adhere to these regulations. Submit complaints through the Council for Medical Schemes (CMS): medicalschemes.co.za/consumer-assistance/complaintsprocedure/

B. Prosthetic Benefit

Most schemes offer a prosthetic benefit for an external medical device. The benefit amount depends on the medical aid and specific plan type.

C. Ex Gratia

In special circumstances, a scheme may consider an ex gratia contribution above the PMB and prosthetic benefit.

With detailed motivation and supporting arguments, an ex gratia committee may increase the allocated funding on compassionate grounds. This is often once-off.

What May Be Funded?

- Medical treatment
- Rehabilitation
- The prosthesis

Necessary Documents

Your prosthetist needs to submit:

- A detailed motivation, diagnosis and necessary ICD codes.
- A quotation for prescribed components and professional services.
- An Amputee Mobility Predictor Score (AMPPRO Test).
- A prescription from the treating doctor, where necessary.

Medical aid application pathway



This information is provided as a guide only. Check with your insurer or funding provider for the most up-to-date eligibility criteria, benefits, and claim requirements.

COIDA Funding

A practical guide to prosthetic treatment and rehabilitation funding

2. Financial Considerations

South African employers are required by law to make a monthly contribution to the Department of Labour's Compensation Fund, which compensates people who sustain an injury at work.

Who Is Covered?

COIDA applies to casual and full-time employees. It provides compensation for disablement or death caused by occupational injuries or diseases.

ADMINISTRATORS

- Federal Employer's Mutual Assurance Company (FEM) - construction industry.
- Rand Mutual Assurance (RMA) - mining and the iron, steel and metal industries.
- Workmans Compensation Fund (WCA) - all other industries

How? RMA

1. Inform your employer immediately of any injury sustained while on duty. The employer must report an accident to RMA within 7 days, or an occupational disease within 14 days of diagnosis.
2. Give the required documents to your employer for submission with the claim:
   - Section 51 document if under 26, or a learner or trainee.
   - First and follow-up medical reports, particularly for Temporary Total Disablement (TTD).
   - Final assessment document.
3. After receiving a claim number, visit your prosthetist for the RMA pre-authorisation application and motivation.

How? WCA And FEM

1. Report the injury to your employer immediately.
2. The employer and treating doctor complete the necessary WCA forms.
3. A case number is allocated for all future claims and enquiries.
4. Follow up on registration and acceptance of liability.
5. With a claim number, visit your prosthetist. The prosthetist submits an application and motivation to WCA for pre-authorisation.

What Is Covered?

- Prosthetic prescription and eligibility.
- Renewal periods and application forms.
- Reimbursable professional fees.
- Components from entry-level to advanced technology.

Necessary Documents

For information and relevant forms, visit: www.labour.gov.za

Avoid Delays

Keep the claim number, every form and every medical report. Follow up with the employer until liability is accepted.

COIDA Claim Pathway



This information is provided as a guide only. Check with your insurer or funding provider for the most up-to-date eligibility criteria, benefits, and claim requirements.

Injury-Related Claims

A practical guide to prosthetic treatment and rehabilitation funding

3. Personal Injury - Who?

MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE

Potential causes include hospital-acquired infection from non-sterile IV equipment or after artificial joint replacement; mismanagement of infection; misdiagnosis of vascular disease or trauma-related vascular damage; and compartment syndrome inside a cast or brace.

GENERAL PERSONAL INJURY

Gunshots, dog bites or assault which lead to amputation eventual amputation.

METRORAIL / TRANSNET

Injury while using the South African rail network may support a claim against Metrorail or Transnet.

Personal Injury - How?

For suspected medical negligence, seek advise from a medical negligence attorney. With medical experts, the attorney will investigate whether negligence potentially caused the amputation. A relatively small percentage of these cases succeed. It must be shown that the alleged negligence caused the amputation and that the underlying condition, disease or injury would not have caused it anyway. For general injury, a claim is laid against the insurer of the responsible individual, group or organisation. A dog-bite claim may be against the owner or the owner‘s personal liability insurance. Consult an experienced personal injury attorney to assess whether any claim is viable and likely to succeed.

What May Be Claimed?

- Medical treatment and rehabilitation.
- The prosthesis.
- Loss of income.

4. Road Accident Fund - Who?

The RAF provides compulsory cover to South African road users. A victim injured in an accident involving a third party may claim qualifying medical costs, loss of employment or income, and long-term treatment. This includes car, motorcycle, taxi, bus, truck and pedestrian accidents.

How?

Consider independent legal advice from an attorney who specialises in RAF claims.

What May Be Compensated?

1. Financial reimbursement for general damages.
2. An undertaking certificate for future medical expenses.
3. Financial compensation for future loss of income.

Necessary Documents

An attorney handles the process end-to-end.
Once an undertaking certificate is issued, eligible prosthetic treatment may be funded by the RAF.
Undertaking certificate: the RAF‘s acknowledgement that it will cover qualifying future medical expenses related to accident injuries.

Claim Preparation Pathway



This information is provided as a guide only. Check with your insurer or funding provider for the most up-to-date eligibility criteria, benefits, and claim requirements.

Other Funding Routes

A practical guide to prosthetic treatment and rehabilitation funding

5. Private Funds

Private funding may be needed when the person is not a member of a medical aid and the limb loss did not result from a road accident or occupational injury.

WHO?

People not covered by an insurer in this guide. Limb loss may result from disease, injury or trauma, or a congenital condition.

HOW?

- Savings, bank credit or loans, or the sale of assets.
- Contributions or donations from family and friends.
- Sponsorship.
- Fundraising events.

WHAT?

Medical treatment, rehabilitation and the prosthesis.

6. Disability Insurance

Disability insurance claims occur when a person has diminished capability or cannot continue in their current professional role due to illness or injury. Depending on the policy, support may be a monthly income benefit or a lump sum.

Benefits may be used for prosthetic components, fittings, rehabilitation and maintenance. Ask your broker what is covered and which documentation is required.

7. Public Sector

All South Africans can access care through government health facilities.

1. Visit your nearest public clinic for assessment.
2. If needed, you will be referred to a government orthotics and prosthetics centre.
3. A prosthetist will evaluate your needs and recommend suitable treatment and components.

Public-sector choices may be more limited than private care, but technology continues to improve and more advanced components are becoming available.

Choose The Most Appropriate Route



This information is provided as a guide only. Check with your insurer or funding provider for the most up-to-date eligibility criteria, benefits, and claim requirements.

Connect With The Össur Community

Real stories. Shared experiences. Practical information.

Follow Össur South Africa on social media for educational resources, prosthetic information and stories from people living with limb loss.

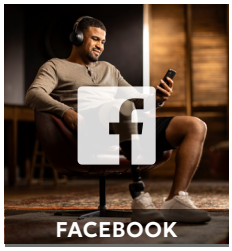
Hear from our online community as they share their experiences, everyday learnings and perspectives on living life with prosthetics.

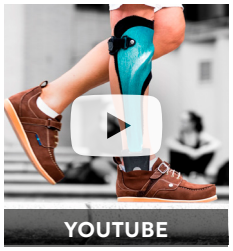
Follow. Learn. Connect. Be inspired.

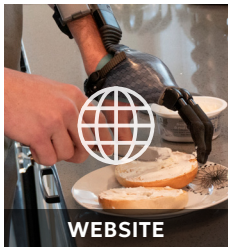
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