

## **Information for the public about physiotherapy following amputation of a lower limb**

**This information is for adults who have had or are having an amputation of the leg from the ankle up. It does not cover amputations in the foot or toes.**

### **■What will my patient journey be like?**

During your patient journey, you will be seen by different physiotherapists, for example in the hospital, at the rehabilitation centre and in the community. Your physiotherapist will give you information about the stages of your treatment and where these will take place. After your operation your treatment will start straight away and will continue either at home, in a community hospital or as an outpatient. Your physiotherapist will discuss with you if an artificial leg (prosthesis) will help you. You will be referred to a prosthetic rehabilitation centre for a full assessment and to discuss your options. If a prosthesis is not going to be helpful, you may still be referred to a local team who are used to working with amputees. You may want to meet another amputee with your family or carer. Please ask your physiotherapist about this. This can happen before or after your amputation. Your physiotherapist will also give you written information about exercise, treatment and support at home.

**■When will I meet a physiotherapist?** You may meet a physiotherapist before your amputation surgery. This may not always be possible. If possible, your physiotherapist will carry out an assessment and talk to your surgeon about the level of amputation you will have. They will give you information about your rehabilitation process. They teach you the exercises you will need to do after your surgery and how to use a wheelchair. They will ask you lots of questions about your home so that they can work with the

occupational therapist to start planning your safe return home. They will talk to you about what help you might need when you get home.

Your physiotherapy should start on the first day after your operation. As long as your pain is under control, your physiotherapist will teach you exercises, check your lungs and help you to transfer to a wheelchair. As your rehabilitation continues and you move to different locations, you will be introduced to new physiotherapy teams.

**■What does a physiotherapist do?** A physiotherapist is an important member of the team. They will play a key role in your treatment, both before and after your amputation. The physiotherapist will work with you and other team members to set and work towards your treatment goals both in hospital and throughout your rehabilitation. They will give you information and advice about what you might be able to do after your amputation. The physiotherapist has a number of jobs which include:

- Helping you learn how to get in/out of bed, on/off a wheelchair and toilet
- Helping you with your pain
- Helping you to come to terms with your amputation
- Giving you exercises
- Looking at your wound
- Checking the swelling and treating it as needed
- Helping you get home from hospital safely
- Helping you to use your wheelchair or prosthesis safely
- Encourage you to lead a healthy lifestyle
- Give you advice about how to look after your remaining leg.

**If you work with your physiotherapist and team, you will give yourself the best chance of a good recovery**

## **Information for the public about physiotherapy following amputation of a lower limb**

■ **What knowledge should my physiotherapist have?** Your physiotherapist will know what may affect your treatment and recovery. This includes your medical problems, general health and fitness, the level of amputation, the surgery and how your wound heals. Your physiotherapist will be able to access information for you about having a prosthesis and how to use it.

### **After your operation:**

■ **What happens if I have pain?** If you have stump pain or phantom limb pain, your physiotherapist will work closely with your doctors and nurses to make sure you have the right information and treatment. Everyone is different and you will get the treatment appropriate for you.

■ **Is swelling normal?** Yes. Your physiotherapist will give you a special stretchy elastic sock to wear to help control this swelling, as swelling can affect wound healing and how soon a prosthesis can be fitted.

■ **What happens if I fall?** People who have had an amputation are more likely to fall. Your physiotherapist will give you information about what you can do to prevent falls and how to get up off the floor if you fall.

■ **Will I need any equipment?** Your physiotherapist will talk to you about equipment you may need during your treatment or once you go home. They will work closely with the occupational therapist to decide what equipment may be needed.

■ **What am I likely to be able to do?** This depends on many things and is something personal to each patient. Your physiotherapist will assess your joints, muscles, and balance. They will use this

information to help you set realistic treatment goals. The aim is to make you as fit and strong as possible so that you can be independent with things like; getting in and out of bed, moving around in a wheelchair and looking after yourself.

■ **Will I learn to walk?** It is important to know that using a prosthesis uses a lot of energy and not everyone will be able to use one. Therefore some people will not be able to walk again, some patients will be safer and able to do more for themselves using a wheelchair without a prosthesis. Your physiotherapist will assess you, this will help to decide if a prosthesis will be useful. This assessment may include using an early walking aid. This piece of equipment is used to get you standing up and taking steps. If you are able to use the early walking aid the physiotherapist will continue to practice with you until you are ready to have a prosthesis made.

Once a prosthesis is made and fitted your physiotherapist will train you how to use it. You will not be able to take it home until you are safe to use it.

Your physiotherapist will help you with:

- Walking indoors and outdoors and stairs
- Using walking aids. Eg. Crutches /sticks
- Monitoring your independence long term

■ **What can I do?** Stay healthy. This includes:

- Not smoking
- eating a balanced diet
- keeping active
- looking after your remaining leg
- speaking to someone if you have concerns about your health and medicines

For further information about physiotherapy for amputees and prosthetics visit <https://bacpar.csp.org.uk>

**If you work with your physiotherapist and team, you will give yourself the best chance of a good recovery**