Commonly Asked Questions

Q: Will I be in a lot of pain after surgery?

A: As with any major surgery, there will be pain afterwards. Everyone is different and everyone tolerates pain at different levels. We will make sure that your pain is monitored and treated accordingly. Typically, pain is controlled with IV medication immediately after surgery and is then transitioned to oral medication as needed.

Q: How long will I be in the hospital after surgery?

A: Again, everyone is different and your hospital stay will vary depending on a variety of factors. Most patients require in-patient rehabilitation or rehab at a skilled nursing facility after an amputation. This stay may be several weeks. If your pain is well controlled, you have the ability to return home independently and if you need minimal assistance; your hospital stay may only be a few days.

Q: How do I optimize my wound healing?

A: Many things can help your wound heal properly such as proper skin care as well as proper nutrition. Proper nutrition boosts the immune system, promotes collagen synthesis (the main structural protein in skin tissue), and decreases healing time. Many nutrition aspects help with healing, including a higher number of calories, including protein, vitamins A and C, and sometimes zinc.

Q: Will insurance cover my prosthesis?

A: Most insurances cover prostheses. It is recommended that you call your insurance provider and determine if you have an active plan. You may also ask questions such as what is my deductible or out of pocket maximum for the year? Do I have a co-insurance? The answers to these questions will help you determine what you will be financially responsible for. Each plan is different and each policy within that plan can differ. Once you have been casted for your prosthesis, your prosthetic provider can provide you with details of your specific costs based on specific design and components of your prosthesis.



Q: It feels like my foot is still there. Is that normal?

A: It is completely normal to feel pain, tingling, burning and other sensations from what feels like the part of your limb that is no longer there. This is known as phantom limb sensation. For some, these sensations resolve with minimal intervention. Others may require additional strategies to help manage the symptoms.

Q: When do I start to wear a shrinker?

A: Shrinker wear is started once the surgeon/provider gives you the okay to begin wearing it. Typically, the surgeons would give you the okay to wear a shrinker following staple removal. Every situation is different and so when to begin shrinker wear can vary.

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Q: How long after surgery will I need to wear my shrinker?

A: Typically, a patient will continue to wear a shrinker for the first several months to a year after amputation in order to control limb volume (size of the limb). Some patients continue to wear shrinkers for their entire lifetime as they feel more comfortable wearing the shrinker. Some amputees have issues with chronic edema and need to wear the shrinker when they are not wearing their prosthesis.

Q: Will I be able to walk again?

A: Every patient's story is different and everyone's outcome may be different. If you were able to walk prior to surgery, you will most likely be able to walk after surgery. Recovery after surgery and how quickly you return to an ambulatory status often depends on the level of amputation. A person with a below knee amputation versus an above knee amputation may be able to return to walking quicker as they still have their knee to help control the prosthesis. Walking with an above knee prosthesis can be more difficult due to the added number of joints a person needs to learn how to control and rehabilitation can take much longer.

Q: How long will it take for me to be fit with a prosthesis?

A: A typical time frame for casting and fitting a prosthesis is 6-12 weeks after your surgery. This of course depends on how well your limb heals. Wound healing is often complex and can involve minor to major setbacks resulting in longer wound healing time frames. Everyone is different and the time frame can vary from weeks to several months.

Q: Will it hurt to walk on a prosthesis?

A: In the beginning, there may be mild discomfort as your body gets accustomed to wearing a prosthesis but there should never be pain. If you are having any pain, your prosthetist should be informed immediately so that changes can be made to ensure a comfortable fit. It will take time to build up tolerance to wearing a prosthesis which is why there is a very slow and gradual wear schedule to follow once you receive your prosthesis. This is done in order to allow your limb time to acclimate to the weight bearing pressures, materials and contact of your prosthesis.

Q: How will I get up the stairs to get into my house or to my bedroom?

A: Some people are able to continue going up and down stairs similar to how they did before—by "hopping" up or down one step at a time, using the support of a handrail and/or crutches. Others require alternative methods for going up or down stairs (i.e., going up and down the stairs on your bottom). For short flights of stairs, such as entering a home, a ramp may be built to allow you to use a wheelchair.

Commonly Asked Questions

Q: When can I bathe?

A: Until your wound is fully healed, you will be limited to sponge bathing. You should use warm water and mild soap to gently wash the surrounding areas making sure not to rub directly over the incision/scab. Submerging your incision before it is healed can increase your risk of developing an infection. Once your wound is entirely closed/healed you may start submerging in a shower or bathtub. A shower chair or bench can be used to make bath transfers safer.

Q: When can I drive?

A: You will not be allowed to drive if using narcotics. Once off narcotics, there are several different considerations that impact when and if someone returns to driving. Some of these include: which leg was affected, the location of the amputation, sensation present, strength, and limb/prosthetic control. You should work with your rehab team to determine when you are safe to be cleared for driving. On occasion, a formal driving assessment may be recommended. It is possible that a vehicle alteration is required to allow the left leg or hands to control acceleration and breaking.

Q: What is involved in the casting process?

A: When you first meet with your prosthetist for the casting, he/she will take a set of measurements and note the important features of your limb. Your prosthetist will apply layers of plaster to obtain an impression of your limb which will then be filled with plaster. This provides a model for which your diagnostic socket will be made. Once the proper modifications are made, a technician will construct the diagnostic socket.

Q: What can I expect at the initial fitting of my diagnostic socket?



A: At the first fitting appointment it is important that you wear loose, comfortable clothing. Your prosthetist will explain how to don (put on) and doff (take off) your prosthesis, how to care for it, and provide a wearing schedule for you to follow. You will also learn how to modify the fit of your prosthesis with prosthetic socks and what to look for when you check your limb frequently. Proper alignment is attained while you walk inside the parallel bars and before you leave the office, your diagnostic socket is reinforced for added strength. The diagnostic socket is utilized for 1-2 weeks before your definitive (permanent) prosthesis is made.

Q: Why do I have to go to therapy/rehab?

A: Therapy will assist with ensuring that you have adequate range of motion, strength, and endurance to control your prosthesis. Physical therapy will also teach you how to ambulate properly with your prosthetic to reduce risk for falls and future orthopedic pain/injuries.

Commonly Asked Questions

Q: How often will I be seen for physical therapy?

A: Typically, you will see your physical therapist 2-3 times per week but it is ultimately up to your therapist and physician to determine how many times per week and for how many weeks.

Q: Once I receive my definitive prosthesis, how often will I see my prosthetist?

A: You will need to follow up with your prosthetist often after the delivery of your definitive prosthesis. As you continue to wear your prosthesis more often and become active again, your limb will change in shape and size and your prosthetist will need to make changes to your socket to accommodate those changes. If you are having pain or discomfort at any time, you will need to see your prosthetist immediately.

Q: Will I be able to participate in the sports or leisure activities I did prior to my amputation?

A: Yes! As long as your physician agrees, you should be able to return to the activities you enjoyed prior to your surgery. Prosthetic components today offer the amputee a variety of options that make participation in recreational activities possible. Be sure to express this to your prosthetist so that the proper components can be selected for your prosthesis.

Q: Can I wear different shoes?

A: Your prosthesis was designed to be worn with a specific shoe heel height. Switching to a shoe with a lower or higher heel height (or going without a shoe) can create a range of problems, from discomfort to safety issues, depending on the type of prosthesis. Any change in heel height, changes the ideal alignment of a prosthesis. You can certainly change shoes, but talk to your prosthetist before you change shoe style to a different heel height.

Q: How do I find out if I qualify for additional services?

A: Call your county and ask for a MnChoice Assessment. You can also go to the following websites for more information regarding MnChoices Assessment.

- https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/services/home-community/programs-and-services/mnchoices.jsp
- **Disability Hub MN –** www.disabilityhubmn.org
  - Or Call Disability Hub MN at 866-333-2466
- **Senior Linkage Line –** www.seniorlinkageline.com
  - Or Call Senior Linkage Line at 800-333-2433



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