

Live Well:

Returning Home After Amputation

Getting your home ready

Your home should be a place where you feel safe, comfortable, and able to move around with ease. Making changes before you return can help your recovery and prevent falls or injuries.

Depending on your needs, you and your healthcare team might consider:

- Checking your moveability around your home. Is it wheelchair friendly?
- Installing handrails and grab bars in the bathroom and stairways
- Moving furniture to create clear and wide pathways
- Changing the height of your bed and seating areas. For example, adjustable beds
- Using non-slip mats
- Removing trip hazards such as rugs, cords, or clutter
- Installing ramps
- Adaptive kitchen tools, reachers and grabbers
- Car modifications so you can resume using your vehicle

Planning ahead of time with your healthcare team will make your return home smoother, save unnecessary expensive changes, and allow you to focus on healing and regaining your independence.

Recovering Well

Recovery continues once you return home, and looking after your health becomes an ongoing priority. Setting up the right support will help you manage your recovery, stay comfortable, and build independence as you continue to heal.

Medical Check-Ups and Rehabilitation

It's important to schedule follow-up appointments with your local doctor, rehabilitation team, amputation nurse, and prosthetics specialists and any others involved in your care to help track your healing progress, manage any pain or discomfort, and address any concerns that arise to ensure that your recovery stays on track.

Physiotherapy and occupational therapy are important to help you to regain strength, balance, and mobility. These therapies can help you learn new ways to move, improve your independence in daily activities.

It is important to keep looking after your other foot. Keeping in regular contact with your podiatrist will help keep an eye on how things are going.

Work closely with your healthcare team to identify the best supports within your community, an at-home program and/or telehealth support.

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Wound Care

Proper wound care is important in the weeks and months following surgery. If you have diabetes or other conditions that affect blood circulation and healing, additional care may be needed to prevent complications.

Community health services can provide ongoing wound care, bandage changes, and monitoring for signs of infection.

You can contact your local Indigenous health service to explore culturally appropriate care and support options available to you.

Your healthcare provider or a local community service organisation can also help find services in your area.

Emotional and Cultural Well-being

Losing a limb affects not just your body but also your mind, emotions, and spirit. It's important to recognise these challenges and find the right ways to support you through the recovery process.

Including cultural and emotional well-being into your plan can bring you peace, purpose, and healing. With the support of your community, Elders, and professional counselors, you'll have the strength to get through this challenging time and move forward.

- Cultural Practices - Engaging with Elders and community leaders can help incorporate traditional healing practices into your recovery process.
- Community Support - Your family and community are invaluable sources of support.
- Professional Counseling – it can help your recovery to have a culturally competent therapist who can guide you through feelings about your amputation, helping you process these emotions in a healthy way. Speak with your rehab team to connect you with someone appropriate or you can talk to your GP to put a Medicare mental health treatment plan in place to help you access these services outside the hospital.

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Supportive Spaces

As you continue your recovery journey, it's important that your environment supports your needs, whether at home, work, or school. Creating a safe and comfortable space is essential for regaining independence and staying on track with your rehabilitation. Speak with your health care team about when is the right time for you to return to work or education.

Support at Work

It's important to work closely with your employer to make sure your return to work feels as smooth and comfortable as possible.

This includes having an open conversation about leave options and any workplace adjustments that you will need to make sure you feel supported.

The Employment Assistance Fund offers financial assistance to cover the cost of workplace modifications, assistive equipment, and support services for people with disabilities, including amputees. Employers and employees can apply for this funding through JobAccess.

Some important questions are:

- Is there enough space in your office for you to move around freely?
- Is your desk or chairs appropriate for you or do you need an adjustable option?
- Do you need extra time or help to attend meetings?
- Are the toilet facilities accessible for you?
- Do you need help with transport?

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Support at School

Returning to school, TAFE, or university after an amputation can feel like a big step, but with the right support, you can continue learning, connecting with friends, and participating in school life.

Your education is important, and there are people ready to help you along the way, ensuring you continue to grow and learn in a way that works for you.

It's important to talk to the school's wellbeing team, disability support officer, or principal to create a plan that meets your needs, helping you feel comfortable and confident.

Some important questions are:

- Is there enough space in your classroom for you to move around freely?
- Are the desks and chairs appropriate for you or do you need an adjustable option?
- Do you need extra time or help so you can get between classes?
- Are the toilet facilities accessible for you?
- Do you need help with transport?

Participating in sports, art, music, and cultural activities at your school is a great way to stay connected, express yourself, and build confidence. Talk to your teachers or coaches about what works best for you and what changes can be made to ensure you can take part comfortably and safely.

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Community Connections

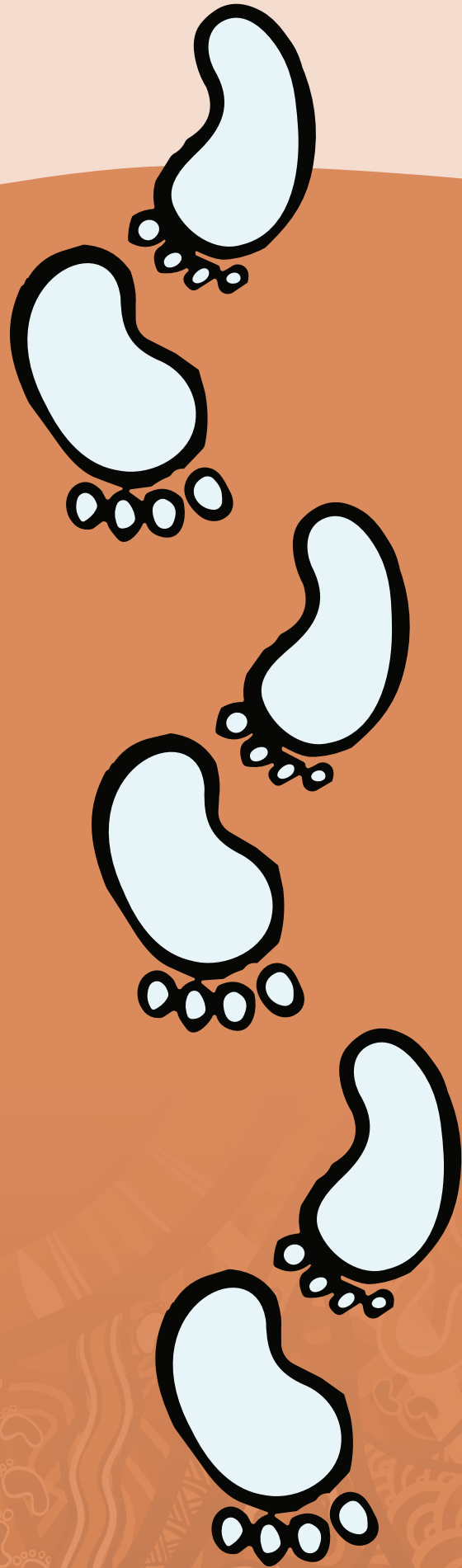
Staying Part of Your Community

Staying connected with your community is an important part of your recovery. It helps you feel like you belong and gives you the support you need as you adjust to life after amputation. Spending time with others can bring strength, comfort, and help you stay connected to your culture and identity, which is important for healing.

Getting involved in community events and cultural activities is a great way to stay social, have fun, and make lasting memories with people who share similar experiences. It's also a chance to meet others in your community who have been through an amputation or have a loved one who has. There are options to get involved both at in-person meetings or by joining an online group such as those run by Limbs 4 Life.

If you are finding it difficult to stay involved, speak to a family member, Elder, or one of your support services to find new ways to reconnect and get the support you need.

Peer support groups offer a chance to talk with someone who understands what you're going through, which can be helpful and comforting.



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Community Connections

When you are ready, your experience can make a difference for others who are facing similar challenges. By sharing your journey and supporting those around you, you can help raise awareness, promote understanding, and build a stronger community for amputees.

Here are some ways you can help others:

- Look out for people who are caring for you whilst you recover from your amputation.
- Get involved in programs that support amputees and work to improve their rights and needs.
- Join community conversations to raise awareness and share your experiences.
- Let others know about resources and services that can help.
- Share your story to show others they are not alone and offer strength to those who may be feeling isolated or unsure.
- Be there for people who need advice, listen to their experiences, or offer a kind word when needed.

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How can I find out more?

13Yarn

13 92 76 / www.13yarn.org.au/

National support line for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in crisis.

Limbs4life - Peer Support

<https://www.limbs4life.org.au/peer-support>

Connecting individuals and their families pre or post amputation with trained amputees who have experience living with, and adapting to limb loss.

WellMob

<https://wellmob.org.au/>

Social, emotional and cultural wellbeing online resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)

<https://jobaccess.gov.au/i-am-a-person-with-disability/looking-applying-job/government-services-help-you/funding-workplace-changes/what-eaf>

1800 464 800

Provides reimbursements for workplace modifications, equipment and services necessary for a person with disability to perform their employment duties.

Your rights at work

<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/employee-rights-under-disability-discrimination-act>

Your rights as an employee under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth).

We recognise First Nations peoples' cultural, spiritual, physical and emotional connection with their land. We honour and pay our respects to First Nations Elders, both past and present. We acknowledge and thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who shared their stories and expertise to codevelop these resources.

Artwork by Brooke Rigney (Rigney-Lively)
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Mental health treatment plan

<https://toolkit.lifeline.org.au/articles/general/what-is-a-mental-health-treatment-plan>

A plan created by your GP in collaboration with you to outline goals and actions for your mental health treatment, providing access to Medicare-rebated sessions with allied health professionals like psychologists and social workers.

Disability Gateway

<https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/>

Helps people with disability, their families and carers find the information, services and support they need.

Preventative Health SA

<https://www.preventivehealth.sa.gov.au/healthy-living/aboriginal-health-wellbeing/services-support-for-aboriginal-people>

Services and support networks that are culturally appropriate and respectful that are available to the South Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The websites above may change over time, ask your health care team for suggestions if you need support.



To view the videos that support this booklet, please scan this qr code or visit the Limbs 4 Life website.

<https://www.limbs4life.org.au/aboriginal-resources>

Notes

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