

Fact Sheet #4

Returning home following an upper limb amputation



Going home following a stay in hospital is exciting, but you need to think about what needs to be done to make your home as easy as possible to get around.

This Fact Sheet looks at what you should consider prior to going home and the things that you will need to help you to access, live and function independently at home.

What is an assistive device?

An assistive device is the name given to equipment which aids your ability to do things. Such items may include knives and forks, kitchen equipment, and bathroom options (such as taps which flick off rather than turn off) to make life easier.

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What is a structural modification?

Structural modifications refers to parts of your home which require changes - such as changes to door handles and/or the addition of specialised taps and knobs.

In some instances building standards need to be met when some home modifications are made - so it is important you seek the correct assistance when having home modifications made.

In general, if you require an assistive device fitted in your home, you should ask for help from your Occupational Therapist to make sure that you receive devices that suit your needs. It is important to discuss funding options and costs for these items.

What to consider following an upper limb amputation?

Consider what tasks require two hands and how you will do these now. Some general considerations may include:

- Consider using assistive devices that will help you to pick up things that are on the floor, placed up high and/or items that are difficult to reach.
- Examine options when it comes to cutlery (knives/forks/spoons) and chopping devices, as there are specialised boards which can hold items down so that you can cut them.
- Buttons can be difficult for some upper limb amputees. You may prefer to change clothing to be fixed with Velcro. Similarly you may prefer to wear shoes without laces which can be fastened with Velcro straps or that slip onto your feet without the need to be tied up.
- Electronic options for computer keyboards and a mouse and/or voice controlled programs and software.
- Changes to your vehicle which will support you to drive, for example spinner knobs.

There are also simple strap-on devices and attachments, which don't require the use of a prosthesis for items such as a knife/fork. Talk to your Occupational Therapist about these options.

Remember: There are many products available that can help you to live independently. Seek advice from your healthcare provider if you need assistance or support.



What are the prosthetic solutions for upper limb amputees?

There are a number of different prosthetic solutions for upper limb amputees and it's always good to chat to your prosthetic clinician about the options which may be available and suitable for you. Upper limb prosthetics have greatly advanced in recent years, but it's important to think about what you need the prosthesis to do for you prior to making your decision.

There are a range of upper limb technology devices that can allow you to undertake particular activities. For example there are devices which will allow you to hold a fishing rod, use a hammer or a drill, ride a bike, play pool, lift weights or play music. Some good examples of what is available can be found at www.trsprosthetics.com. There are many different terminal devices (devices which attach to the end of a prosthesis) that can be changed to suit specific activities. Talk to your Prosthetist about your options.

The Independent Living Centres are also a wonderful source for assistive devices. You can find out more by visiting www.ilcaustralia.org.au or call **1300 885 886** (toll-free).

limbs4life

For more information contact Limbs 4 Life
1300 78 2231 (toll free)
 Email info@limbs4life.org.au

www.limbs4life.org.au