Adjusting to Your Amputation

Your emotions

An amputation is a life-changing event. After surgery, your body looks and feels different from before. You will have emotional changes as well. It will take time to adjust.

You may feel many new emotions that are part of the normal grieving process. As you recover, it may help you to share your feelings with a family member, friend or someone on your medical team.

Common terms

Ace bandage or elastic wrap: a long stretchy bandage wrapped around the limb. It is used to control swelling.

AKA: above-knee (transfemoral) amputation.

BKA: below-knee (transtibial) amputation.

Contracture: limited movement in a joint. This is caused by muscle tightness or imbalance.

Edema: swelling, or a build-up of fluid.

Extension: straightening the joint.

Flexion: bending the joint.

Phantom pain: a feeling of pain in the limb (cramping, squeezing, burning or shooting pain), even though the limb is no longer there.

Phantom sensation: a sense that the missing limb is still there. This is normal. It may feel like tingling, pressure or numbness.

Prosthesis: an artificial limb to replace the amputated limb.

Prosthetist: an expert who fits, designs and makes a prosthesis.

Residual limb: the part of the limb that remains after surgery, sometimes called a “stump.”

Rigid dressing: a prosthesis placed on the limb right after surgery. It does not allow movement.

Semi-rigid dressing (SRD): a bandage that sticks to the skin and allows some joint movement. It is stiffer than an Ace bandage or shrinker.

Shrinker: a stretchy, sock-like garment placed over the end of the limb. It puts light pressure on the limb to control swelling.

Sound limb: the limb that was not amputated.

Resources

Amputee Coalition of America: www.amputee-coalition.org

National Amputation Foundation: www.nationalamputation.org

American Amputee Foundation: www.americanamputee.org