

Returning to Activities with Your Upper Limb Prosthesis

Your occupational therapist can help you identify and incorporate these tools so you can easily return to the things you love doing. From cooking and baking to playing sports and driving, there are numerous adaptive tools and techniques to help you regain your independence and confidence in everyday tasks. Let's explore some practical tips and modifications to make this transition smoother.

COOKING AND BAKING

When cooking, keep an organized kitchen space with tools such as a multi-chopper, vegetable slicer, different styles of knives, and one-handed cutting boards. Built-up utensils with larger handles or grips are more manageable with a prosthesis, and electric kitchen gadgets like can openers, food processors, and mixers reduce the need for manual effort. Stabilize items with non-slip mats, Dycem, or damp towels under bowls and cutting boards to keep them steady. When baking, prepare and measure all your ingredients first to ease the baking process. Consider using a grip pad and tools such as one-handed rolling pins. Finally, practice patience and remember to put safety first. Even though it may be tempting to use your prosthesis to grasp a hot oven rack or baking pan, we recommend always using an oven mitt or hot pad for the safety of you and your prosthesis.

SPORTS

Regular physical activity can help improve your overall fitness and make playing sports easier. Consider adaptive tools and equipment. Use equipment designed for one-handed use or that can be adapted to your needs. Utilize grips or attachments to secure equipment,

such as a hook attachment for a fishing rod or a specialized grip for a kayak paddle. You can also work with your prosthetist to design a prosthesis specifically for the sport you want to play, such as a prosthesis for holding a racket, bat, ball, or weights. Consider no-tie lacing systems for your shoes. Join adaptive sports programs and connect with other athletes who have similar experiences.

OFFICE WORK

Speech-to-text software programs allow you to dictate text and voice recognition systems enable you to more easily operate your computer and type documents. Additionally, there are specialized keyboards designed for one-handed typing. Tablets and touchscreen laptops can be easier to use with on-screen keyboards. Your state's Vocational Rehabilitation department can assist with return to work needs and be found easily by an internet search.



For more information, scan the code or visit [HangerClinic.com/ULResources](https://www.HangerClinic.com/ULResources).

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OUTDOOR WORK

Look for tools specifically designed for one-handed use, such as pruners, hammers, and screwdrivers, or tools with ergonomic handles and adaptive grips that can make tasks easier to manage. When using a hammer or drill, consider using a piece of cardboard to stabilize the nail or screw, removing the cardboard as you almost completely insert it. Electric or battery-powered tools require less manual effort and can make tasks like drilling, sawing, and mowing easier. Use clamps or vices to hold items in place while working.

DRIVING A VEHICLE

Driving a car after an upper limb amputation and with a prosthesis is definitely possible with the right adaptations and techniques. Check with your local DMV for laws for driving with a prosthesis in your state. Driving schools will often have this information and have programs for assessing driving safety or training to drive after amputation. While there are various modifications to a car that can be considered, you should consult with a professional to complete any car modifications. Examples of modifications include a steering knob that may provide better one-hand control over the vehicle or adjustments to the dashboard controls for easy access to headlights, turn signals, and wipers. Consider using voice commands to control various functions like the radio, navigation, and climate control. Just remember, in some states, if you perform a driving test using assistive equipment like a spinner knob on the steering wheel, a restriction may be placed on your license that indicates you always have to drive with a spinner knob.



ATV'S, MOTORCYCLES, AND TRACTORS

Similar to driving a car, there are various modifications that may be considered for ATV's, motorcycles, and tractors. For motorcycles, check with your local DMV for laws for driving with a prosthesis in your state. Driving schools will often have this information and have programs for assessing driving safety or training to drive after amputation. While there are various modifications that can be considered for all these vehicles, you should consult with a professional to complete these modifications. If possible, choose a vehicle with automatic transmission for easier control. Consider modifying the controls to be easily accessible and operable with one hand. A steering knob can provide better one-hand control. Another consideration is to install a lever system that combines control of the front and rear brakes. Always wear appropriate safety gear, which may include a helmet, gloves, eye protection, ear protection, and protective clothing.



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