

Rehabilitation & Physical Therapy

Rehabilitation and physical therapy helps you recover and progress after amputation by working on muscle strength, flexibility and coordination, and training you to use your prosthesis.

YOUR REHABILITATION TEAM

The key players on your rehab team are:



Physical Therapist (PT)

Your physical therapist's job is to help you get stronger, regain your balance, and learn how to use your prosthesis. They will develop an exercise program for your unique needs and help you make the most of it.



Occupational Therapist (OT)

Your occupational therapist is focused on helping you adjust to daily living activities after amputation. This can include fitting assistive technology devices, such as a wheelchair, and coordinating modifications to your home and vehicle.

THE REHABILITATION PROCESS

Rehabilitation has two phases. Pre-prosthetic training occurs before you receive your prosthesis, and prosthetic therapy occurs after you receive your prosthesis.



PRE-PROSTHETIC TRAINING

The pre-prosthetic phase typically begins in the hospital and then usually continues in an inpatient rehabilitation facility or your home. During this time, your PT will work with you on:

Limb desensitization. You will learn to care for, massage, and condition your limb. This will help reduce tenderness, strengthen muscles, support tissues, and increase healthy blood flow to reduce swelling and speed healing.

Stretching & flexibility. Stretching will help minimize muscle tightening and increase your flexibility and range of motion. Both of these are important in movement and walking.

Strength & cardiovascular conditioning. You may begin learning the skills you need for early mobility, such as changing positions, transferring from the bed to a chair, getting



For more resources on adjusting to life with limb loss, scan the code or visit [HangerClinic.com/LimbLoss](https://www.hangerclinic.com/limbloss).

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to the toilet or shower, and balancing while standing. You may also start learning to use crutches or a wheelchair, and even begin the process of establishing the motor control you will need for using your prosthesis.

Residual limb size and shaping

It is normal for your residual limb to decrease in size over the course of a year after surgery. Eventually, the size will stabilize, although it may fluctuate in volume from morning to night. Wearing layers of prosthetic socks helps accommodate these changes to make sure your prosthesis socket remains secure and comfortable. To learn more, scan the code or visit hclinic.info/SockFitVideo.



PROSTHETIC THERAPY

Once you receive your prosthesis, you will start using it during physical and occupational therapy, as well as gradually wearing it according to your prosthetist's schedule for your care. Therapy at this stage may be one-on-one with your therapist(s), in a group setting, or both depending on your plan of care. You will also learn some exercises to do on your own.

You will start by learning the basics of your prosthesis — putting it on and taking it off, managing the fit, and keeping it clean. Next, you will work on proper balance and posture, and then gait training — learning how to walk.

Your therapist will give you a range of exercises to build coordination, strength, and endurance. Your rehabilitation may also include working with your physical therapist on specific movements related to your job.



The importance of attitude

Patience, persistence, and positivity are essential to successful rehabilitation. Make goals that are meaningful to you. You can trust your therapy team to make sure your goals are appropriate as well as inspiring, and help you work towards them in a reasonable time frame. As you find success along the way, you will feel empowered to continue to the next step of your journey.



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