

What to Expect in the Hospital & Beyond

It can be very helpful to understand what to expect. Let's start by looking at what you may experience while in the hospital.

PREPARING FOR SURGERY

If your amputation is scheduled (not an emergency), you will arrive at the hospital, check in for surgery, complete paperwork, and be assigned a room. You will then meet your medical care team. Your surgeon will explain the procedure and ask if you have any questions.

When it is time for surgery, you will put on a surgical gown and remove your jewelry and other personal items. Your medical care team will confirm which

limb is to be amputated and clearly mark it. Once you are on the operating table, a nurse may start an IV line to deliver medications to you or place a catheter into your body to drain urine during surgery. In general, neither of these are painful experiences.

SURGERY & HOSPITAL STAY

You will undergo some form of anesthesia for your surgery. A specialist will monitor your key vital signs during the procedure.

DURING YOUR SURGERY

Once the damaged part of your leg has been removed, your wound will typically be closed with stitches or staples. Sometimes, drain tubes may be used for a short time to clear the wound of excess blood and other fluids.

Finally, the surgical team will apply a dressing. A stocking may also be placed over the wound to hold dressings and drainage tubes in place.

Once the procedure is complete, you will be taken to a recovery area. There, your medical care team will

Helpful Terms

Peer mentor: A person who has experienced limb loss and is available to answer your questions.

Prosthetic limb or prosthesis (plural: prostheses): An artificial replacement for a body part.

Prosthetist: A medical professional who designs and fits prosthetic devices.



For more resources on adjusting to life with limb loss, scan the code or visit HangerClinic.com/LimbLoss.

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wake you up, check your vital signs, and examine the amputation site. After you are cleared, you will go to your hospital room.

AFTER YOUR SURGERY

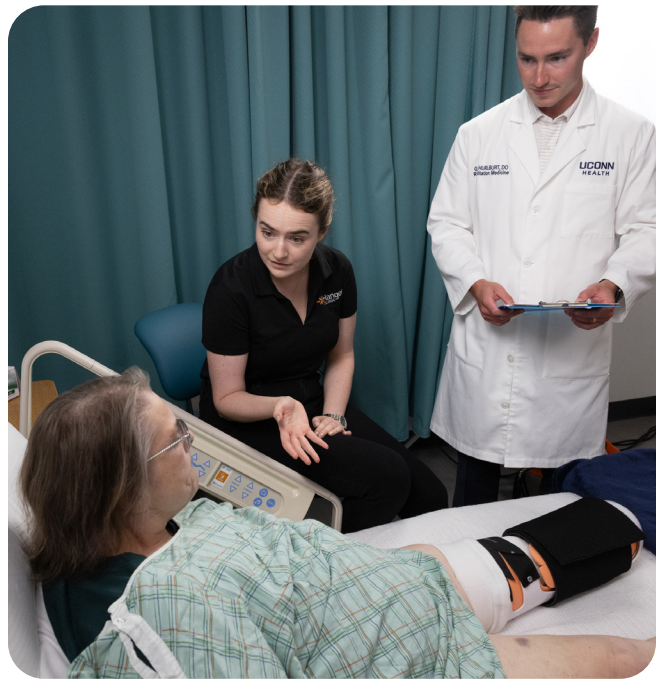
After your surgery, your hospital team will change your wound dressing as needed. Talk with your medical care team about any pain, worries, or questions.

It is important to protect your residual limb. Falls can cause stitches to open, hurt your limb, and delay the healing process. Your medical care team will apply a dressing to your limb to protect it and help to control your pain. Dressings can range from a simple elastic bandage to rigid protectors. Your surgeon will select the best option for your needs. Do not get out of bed without help until your medical care team has indicated you may do so.

Eventually, you will start working on your mobility with your physical therapist. Often, you will start by sitting up and safely moving from the hospital bed to a wheelchair with help.

You may also meet with other members of your rehabilitative team, including a prosthetist.

Additionally, you may experience grief



over your lost limb. This is normal. Do not hesitate to ask your medical care team or loved ones for help.

LEAVING THE HOSPITAL

The length of your hospital stay is typically 3 to 10 days. This depends on many different factors including good strength, balance, and appetite. Depending upon your situation, you may go home, to a nursing facility, or to a rehabilitation facility.

GETTING READY FOR YOUR PROSTHESIS

Your rehabilitative care team will work with you to prepare your limb for a prosthesis. This includes skin care, strengthening, pain control, and limb shaping.



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A compression sock, called a shrinker, is often used to help control swelling. Once your limb is healed, massaging the end of your limb will also prepare it for the pressure of a prosthesis. This process is called desensitization.

You will work with your physical therapist on exercises to gain strength and keep muscles from getting tight. These exercises will help you walk better with a prosthesis.

You may also meet with your prosthetist or peer mentor to ask any questions you may have.

PRESCRIBING & CUSTOM-FABRICATING YOUR PROSTHESIS

Once your limb is well-healed and the initial swelling has gone down, your prosthetist will begin to build your prosthesis. They will take the shape of your limb with a cast or scan of the limb.

This will be used to make a clear test socket that allows the prosthetist to

Note: Most prosthetic services are covered by health insurance, including Medicare Part B. Our team can help you through this process.



evaluate and improve the fit. When a good fit is obtained, a more permanent prosthesis will be made for you.

LIFE WITH YOUR NEW PROSTHESIS

It will take some time to get used to wearing a prosthesis. Your prosthetist will give you a schedule to help.

Give yourself time to learn how to balance and walk with a prosthesis. Continued therapy will help with walking form and safety.

You will meet regularly with your prosthetist for modifications and adjustments. This will continue throughout your life. Some days may feel challenging, but your hard work and dedication will pay off.



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