

FACT SHEET

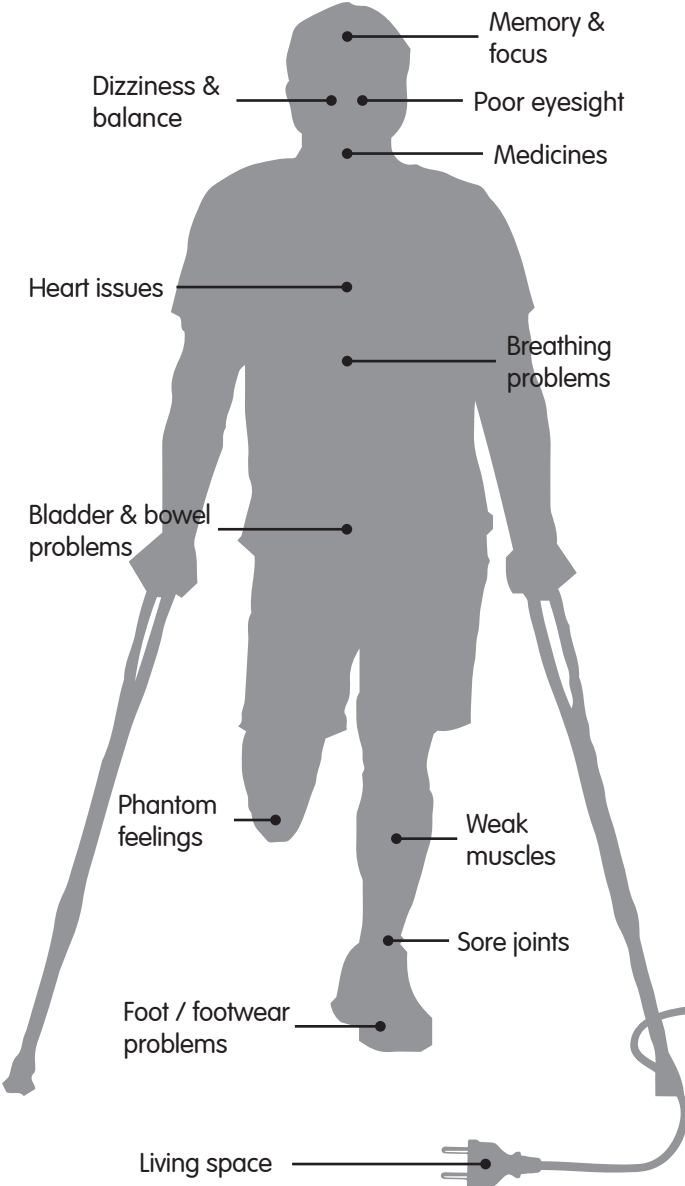
How to Prevent Falls Following an Amputation



What can cause falls?

After an amputation, your brain is still getting used to your no longer having a limb.

As you learn to move again, falls can happen for many reasons.



How some of these might cause falls:

Medicines: Some medicines may cause people to become dizzy or light-headed.

Memory: Forgetting to put the brakes on a wheelchair.

Balance: Losing your balance when you are reaching forward or leaning down.

Phantom feelings: Forgetting that an amputated leg is not there.

Living space: Tripping because of clutter, leads or mats on the floor, wet surfaces in the bathroom.

Bladder & bowel problems: Rushing to the toilet.

Who can help you to prevent falls?

Your physiotherapist, prosthetist and other people in the rehab team can help you learn ways to prevent falls. Ask them when you need help to safely manage to do things or if you want to be more confident about your balance.

You can ask the rehab team to organise a referral to see if you need any equipment to help you at home. This may include handrails, ramps or grab rails.

How can I prevent falls at home?

Make your living space safe:

- Remove mats or rugs from the floor.
- Make sure there are no cords or leads where you may walk.
- Wipe up any spills right away and watch for slippery floors.
- Arrange furniture so you have enough room to move around.
- Use a pickup stick to reach things on the floor or above your head

More accidents happen in the bathroom than elsewhere in the home. To be safe in the bathroom:

- Install grab rails for getting in and out of the bathtub and shower.
- A water-resistant chair with non-slip grips glued to the feet can be useful for showering.
- Place slip-resistant mats in the bathroom.
- Keep everything you might need handy.
- Check the temperature of the water before climbing into a bath or shower (people with diabetic nerve damage may be unable to feel heat).

A lot of falls happen when people wake in the night and forget they had an amputation. To help prevent falls at night:

- Take your time to wake up properly.
- Sit on the edge of the bed until you have got your balance.
- Turn a light on or leave a light on at night.
- Leave your wheelchair beside your bed if you can.

Try to take your time when moving from one place to another. For example, try not to rush to the toilet.

Look after your health:

- If you are feeling dizzy or lightheaded, talk to your GP. Some medicines can cause this.
- Build up your muscles by doing the exercises your physio has given you.
- Wear a rigid removable dressing if you have been advised to, as this will help protect your wound in a fall.



For more helpful resources, please visit our website: www.pw.co.nz/resources

What happens if you do have a fall?

Sometimes falls can still happen. As an amputee, getting up after a fall can be hard.

You may need to learn some new skills that will help you.

Remember when you have a fall, it will most likely give you a fright. Instead of trying to get up in a hurry:

- Take a moment to catch your breath.
- Think about how you can get up safely.

Plan your recovery in your mind before you actually try to do it.

If you **think you have hurt yourself or if you are unable to get off the floor, call for help.**

It may be a good idea to **wear a medical alarm or keep your mobile phone close by.**

Speak to your physio about what to do if you were to fall. They can give you tips and teach you how to get up safely.

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