

FACT SHEET

Returning Home After an Upper Limb Amputation



Losing part of your hand or arm is a major change and you will face some challenges with your everyday tasks. This fact sheet shares ideas to help you understand and adjust to your situation, and tips to help you stay independent at home.

While you are in hospital, therapy staff – especially your Occupational Therapist – can help you plan for going home.

Daily tasks after an upper limb amputation

Think about which everyday activities usually need two hands, and how you can manage these in new ways. An Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist can work with you to find the best solutions.

Some general considerations:

Showering

Pump bottles for soap and shampoo can make washing easier. If reaching is hard, try using long-handled brushes or scrubbers. Easy-turn or lever taps can also help in the bathroom and kitchen.

If your balance is affected, sitting in the shower may be safer. Shower stools, seats or rails can give extra support if needed.

Dressing

Simple dressing aids like button hooks and zipper pulls can make getting dressed easier. After surgery, loose clothing and elastic waistbands are often more comfortable and easier to put on.

You might also want to try elastic or stretchy shoelaces, or slip-on shoes, until you feel confident using one hand for these tasks.

Kitchen tasks

There are many tools that can make cooking and eating easier. These include one-handed chopping boards, electric can openers, and

special cutlery. You can also get strap-on knives and forks that don't need a prosthesis, as well as easy straps to help hold cups and drink bottles.

Technology use

You may find it easier to use voice-controlled software or special keyboards, and mice designed for one hand. On your mobile phone, consider voice options for sending messages and texts.

Driving

You may need a referral for a driving assessment before getting back on the road.

There are safe ways to drive with one hand using modifications such as a steering wheel spinner, or adapted indicators. Your Occupational Therapist doing your driving assessment will discuss the options and help you decide what will suit you best.

Working

You may be able to return to your job or studies with support or adjustments. Talk to your employer or training provider to understand your options.

If your amputation was caused by an injury, ACC may be able to help.

Work and Income NZ (WINZ) can also help with vocational rehabilitation or retraining.

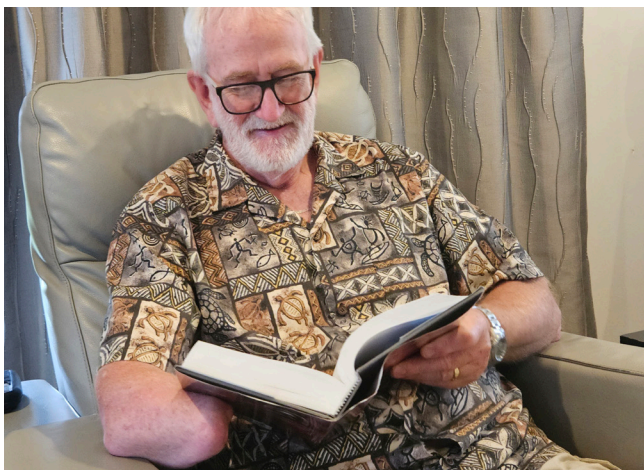
Modified tools or equipment are often available to make working easier and safer for you.

Helpful tips

Most areas have Mobility Centres or Independent Living Centres where you can find small aids and adaptive equipment for everyday activities:

- www.mobilitycentre.co.nz
- www.ilsnz.org
- www.aucklandhealthservices.co.nz

- www.radiusshop.co.nz
- www.c1south.co.nz
- www.alliedmedical.co.nz



You can also explore websites with one-handed tips and tricks – many include videos that will show you how to manage different tasks.

Emotional and mental wellbeing

You may feel a range of emotions including sadness, frustration, anger, even relief. Talking to a psychologist or joining a support group can help.

Peke Waihangā offers a Peer Support Service, where you can be put in touch with a trained volunteer who has gone through similar limb loss to you.

Adapting to life after an upper limb amputation takes time. Be kind to yourself, and don't be afraid to ask for help. With the right tools and support, you can live independently and do the things that matter to you.



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

Who can help?

Here are some people and services that can support you:

- **Occupational Therapist (OT):** Helps you manage daily tasks, can suggest changes at home, and recommend useful equipment.
- **Physiotherapist:** Supports strength, balance, and movement.
- **Social Worker or Case Manager:** Helps you with services, funding, and other support.
- **GP or Nurse:** Looks after your overall health and can refer you to other services.
- **ACC:** If your amputation was caused by an injury, ACC may help with treatment, equipment, and support.
- **Psychologist:** May be available through ACC or Peke Waihanga.
- **Peer Support Service:** Amputee support service available at www.peersupport.nz.

Being assessed for a prosthesis

Your prosthetist and rehab team at Peke Waihanga will talk with you about your goals. They will explain how a prosthesis could help support your independence and make everyday tasks easier.

The team will help you explore how a prosthesis could be useful for work, sports and hobbies such as playing musical instruments.

Upper limb prostheses are usually made for specific purposes. They are tools to support your independence, not full replacements for your hand or arm.

A prosthesis can be functional (to assist with tasks), or cosmetic (for appearance only, with no moving parts).

You can explore all these options fully when you are ready for your assessment at Peke Waihanga.

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Learn more about Peke Waihanga

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🖥 www.orthoticservice.co.nz

🖥 www.peersupport.nz

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Peke Waihanga
Artificial Limb Service



Amputees
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