

Peke Waihanga



Amputee Care in New Zealand



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Why This Information Is Important

Having an amputation is a significant adjustment which can impact on many areas of life.

Amputee care is a complex and constantly evolving part of healthcare, driven by rapid advances in technology. It goes far beyond simply fitting someone with a prosthetic limb.

This booklet explains the different stages of care after limb loss, the healthcare and prosthetic services involved, and how the New Zealand system supports people who need a prosthetic limb.

Who We Are

Peke Waihangā – Artificial Limb & Orthotic Service – is an autonomous Crown Entity under the Crown Entities Act 2004 and Artificial Limb Service Act 2018* and is required to comply with the Public Finance Act 1989.

Peke Waihangā delivers prosthetic, orthotic, rehabilitation, peer support and coordination of care service. We do this based on the following legislated functions:

- To manufacture, import, export, market, distribute, supply, fit, repair, and maintain artificial limbs (defined as artificial limbs and other similar devices).
- To provide rehabilitative and other services to people in connection with artificial limbs.
- To carry out research and development in relation to artificial limbs.
- To advise the Minister on matters relating to artificial limbs.

*The Artificial Limb Service Act 2018 can be found at:

■ www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2018/0034/latest/whole.html

What We Provide

Peke Waihangā provides personalised care for each amputee's journey after limb loss. Care is tailored to individual person's needs and usually includes several stages, such as:

1. Support in hospitals before surgery and during post-operative recovery.
2. Peer support before and after amputation.
3. Residual limb healing and shaping.
4. Assessment to see if a prosthetic limb is suitable, based on mobility goals and overall health.
5. Use of mobility aids like crutches and wheelchairs to support recovery or long-term mobility.
6. Fitting and manufacture of a custom-made prosthetic limb (a specialised medical device)
7. Ongoing rehab, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy and training to support daily activities.
8. The regular review, maintenance, and replacement of the prosthesis, as well as care of the contralateral limb, on an ongoing basis.

The Amputee Journey

What role do prosthetic limbs provide?

A prosthetic limb can help restore a person's mobility and confidence, but it is only one part of New Zealand's publicly funded amputee care system.

Prosthetic limbs can significantly enhance mobility and confidence for many individuals, although they may not be suitable for everyone. For example, *"...86 percent wear their artificial limb every day, while 6.4 percent never wear it."*

Also, a prosthesis may not be a lifelong solution. People's needs can change over time. Prosthetic care includes both clinical support and technical services to make sure each device fits well, functions safely, and can be adjusted as needed over time.

The dedicated team of experts at Peke Waihangā include surgeons, rehabilitation doctors, prosthetists, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, engineers, industrial designers, product engineers, technicians, and peer support volunteers.

What makes Peke Waihangā different from many other health providers (like dentists or physiotherapists) is that it both designs and builds custom prosthetic limbs (which are medical devices). It provides **an integrated model of care** – bringing together rehabilitation, technical expertise and peer support all in one coordinated service.

National Provider for Amputee Care

Having Peke Waihangā as a national provider means people receive continuity of care – consistent, connected care through their journey from planning before amputation, through rehabilitation and reintegration back into everyday life.

This joined-up approach avoids gaps in service, reduces unnecessary costs and ensures high clinical standards across the country. In a small country like New Zealand with a spread-out population, a national service is the best way to maintain specialist expertise, invest in new technology and ensure affordable access to high-quality prosthetic components.

Peke Waihangā is committed to supporting patient choice, offering flexibility and options for personalised amputee care. This is done via our Clinical Allocation Policy which allows patients to:

- Get a second opinion from a 'buddy' prosthetist.
- Be transferred to other prosthetists within the centre.
- Move to another prosthetist in a different centre.
- In special circumstances, access independent opinions from international experts.

This gives people real options – without compromising on safety, quality, or fairness and without risking the introduction of multiple disconnected providers.

A national, integrated service, such as that provided by Peke Waihangā, ensures coordinated and consistent care – crucial for the well-being of amputees. This provides a strong national buying power, reducing overall costs and resulting in equal access, independent of where patients live.

Access to Different Prosthetists

Amputees can access different prosthetists but it's important to understand the options and what this means for care.

Peke Waihanga provides amputee care across the country through national contracts with ACC and Health New Zealand. This care is part of the public health system and is built around a coordinated, multi-disciplinary team-based approach that supports amputees from the time of surgery through to rehabilitation.

As with other areas of healthcare in New Zealand, people can choose to see a private provider if they wish. This is a personal decision, but it's important to be fully informed.

Best practice in amputee care includes comprehensive support, such as clinical assessments, custom prosthetic fitting, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and long-term follow-up. This wrap-around model is supported by both ACC and Health NZ, and it helps ensure the best outcomes for patients.

While a small number of private prosthetic providers operate in New Zealand, we encourage anyone considering this option to make sure the provider can offer the full range of services needed for safe, effective, and ongoing prosthetic care.

Pain After Amputation

Many people experience pain after an amputation. This is common and can include:

- Residual limb pain (in the remaining part of the limb).
- Phantom limb pain (feeling pain in the part that's no longer there).
- Discomfort from wearing a prosthetic limb.

The type and level of pain can vary from person to person, but it can affect mobility, how well a prosthesis fits, and overall wellbeing.

Managing pain is an important part of amputee care. We are continually improving access to proper assessment, support, and pain management options for everyone who needs it.

Appointment Timeframes

For our scheduling process, urgent appointments are typically offered within one working day, and standard appointments are usually available within six to seven working days. These timeframes reflect the next available appointment with a qualified clinician and are not specific to any one prosthetist. While we do our best to accommodate clinician preferences wherever possible, our focus is on ensuring timely access to care based on clinical need and availability.

We recognise that many amputees develop strong, ongoing relationships with their prosthetist and we support this continuity of care. When a patient prefers to see a specific clinician, appointment timing may be influenced by that prosthetist's schedule e.g. if they are on leave, attending professional development, supporting regional clinics, unwell, etc. At times, their availability may also be impacted by a higher volume of urgent assessments or repair needs from other patients they support. We'll always aim to provide care that balances both individual preferences and timely access.

More resources are available on our website:

🖨 www.pekewaihangangz/resources.





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