Orthopedic Appliance Company

How to Adjust to Life with an Artificial Limb
Adjusting to life with an artificial limb will be one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences in your life or the life of your child. Advances in technology and greater awareness regarding accessibility have led to increased opportunities for children and adults with artificial limbs.

If you or your child have recently experienced amputation requiring a prosthetic device, we are here to help. The process can be difficult to navigate. In this short e-book, we will discuss six steps to adjusting to life with an artificial limb.
1. You Have Access to Resources

Experiencing an amputation is unspeakably trying; however, there is great hope in the fact that you have options and access to resources that will enhance your recovery. Regardless of the extent of your injury and amputation, you will have numerous opportunities for rehabilitation and access to tools that will stabilize your life.

Amputation can negatively influence body image, self-esteem, and quality of life. Returning to work can be difficult as well. However, the key to better outcomes is ensuring that patients receive appropriate and comprehensive interdisciplinary care for physical and psychosocial needs, with prosthetic care as a fundamental need, the authors point out.

Source: Miki Fairley - https://opedge.com/Articles/ViewArticle/2016-06_01

Your available resources include:

- **Your Doctor**: Your doctor will be able to refer you to a specialist who can walk you through every step of the process.

- **Your Counselor**: Whether you are providing care for children or family members with amputations, or you yourself are navigating the process, it is wise to seek professional, licensed counseling.

- **Your Family**: For people navigating amputations and artificial limbs, or those who provide care, lean on your family for support.

- **Orthopedic Appliance Company**: We are here as a resource to help you navigate every step of the process to recovery.

- **Your Community**: Your friends, civic groups, religious organizations, and your support network will provide vital care and resources.
2. Navigating the Process

Whether you are adjusting to life after an amputation or helping your children flourish with an artificial limb, there are 5 keys to navigating the process efficiently and effectively:

1. **Consult Doctors and Specialists:** Before making long-term decisions for rehabilitation, purchasing artificial limbs, etc., speak to doctors and recommended specialists.

2. **Consider Mental Health:** For caregivers and people adjusting to life with an amputation, make sure you consider your mental health. You are not alone. For counseling and support group information, contact us.

3. **Explore Your Options:** There are likely numerous options and products available suited to your specific needs.

4. **Evaluation and Assessment:** The sooner our prosthetic staff members are involved with a rehabilitation team, the greater the likelihood of an optimal outcome. We can serve your needs best when we are involved throughout the process.

5. **Follow Up and Maintenance:** After receiving their permanent prosthesis, new amputees usually return to our office several times for adjustments and evaluation. Follow-up visits address any problems patients may be having and routine maintenance, cleaning and replacement of mechanical and electronic components.

If you would like more information about prosthetic devices, we are here to help.
3. Creating the Definitive Prosthesis

Once you or your child is ready to be fitted with a prosthetic device, we create the definitive prosthesis using permanent materials based on our evaluations. Factors considered when formulating the design and fabrication of an artificial limb, include:

- The condition and the weight-bearing ability of the residual limb
- The recipient’s overall state of health, activity level, vocational needs, and expectations
- The most appropriate suspension (method of attaching the prosthesis to the residual limb)
- Specific components to be used, including socket, foot, pylon and (if applicable) knee unit for lower-limb applications and socket, hand, wrist, elbow, and shoulder (as applicable) components for upper-limb systems.
- Cosmetic finishing
- Cost and funding

Every limb we fabricate is one of a kind, customized for the unique physiology, capabilities and lifestyle aspirations of our patients. To ensure the best fit possible, we employ CAD/CAM technology to precisely map you or your child’s residual limb, then create a total-contact socket that will provide the wearer optimal security and comfort with minimal energy expenditure. For younger children, this process will be repeated as your child grows; therefore, it is vital to make sure you find an prosthetic company you trust.
4. Accessibility in School and the Workplace

If your child is starting school with an artificial limb or returning to school after an amputation, it is important to create an open line of communication with you, your child’s teachers, administrators, and counselors. Every situation is unique; however, your school will likely have ideas in place for creating a plan specific for your child. Conversations to have with your child’s school, include:

- Communicating with teachers your child’s successes and struggles to date.
- Discussing a plan for any necessary rest breaks or pain management.
- Strategy for how your child and his or her peers should talk about their limb differences.
- If there will be extensive absences, make sure your child will have the resources he or she needs to stay on schedule academically.
- Will your child need day-to-day assistance transitioning to classrooms and carrying school supplies?

Similarly, if you are starting a new position or returning to the workplace after an amputation, it is important to ask for anything you need to flourish in your employment. Your employer will be happy to accommodate.
5. Find Peer Support Groups

Whether you are adjusting to life with an artificial limb yourself or helping your child or a family member navigate the process, we cannot understate the importance of finding a peer support group. It is vital to connect with other people who share similar struggles and triumphs. Even if your amputation is not a result of a traumatic experience, hearing stories of people whose struggles are similar is infinitely valuable to making the most of life with a prosthetic limb.

"With a group that is diverse in age, levels of amputations, causes of amputations, and stages in the physical and emotional recovery process [LCSW, Mona Patel] says the support group she leads provides, ‘[A] safe place where people can come and share and feel understood and validated-priceless.’"

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If you are a parent of or in close relationship with a child who is adjusting to life with an artificial limb, you need support as well. There are several support groups in Asheville, Hickory, and the Upstate of South Carolina. Contact Orthopedic Appliance Company for more information regarding support and resources in western North Carolina.
6. Accessible Playgrounds

For children, there has been a significant improvement in playground equipment accessibility. [photo of an accessible playground]. Accessible playgrounds are designed to be fun for children of all ages and capabilities. They usually include ramps and swing sets for wheelchairs and other physical needs.

Parks with accessible playground near Asheville, Hickory, and the Upstate include:

North Carolina

- Catawba Meadows Park
  Morganton, NC

- H.O.P.E. Playground
  Hickory, NC

- Zahra Baker All Children’s Playground
  Shelby, NC

South Carolina

- Sunset Park
  Greenville, SC

- Boundless Playground at the Pavilion Recreation Complex
  Greenville, SC

- East Flat Rock Park
  East Flat Rock, NC
Adjusting to life with an artificial limb is no small challenge; however, with the right guidance, support system, and prosthetic device(s), your life will flourish. For more information about our prosthetic and rehabilitation products, visit our website, or give us a call.