

After Your Hospital Stay

1. Having an amputation changes many things – physically and emotionally – for you and your family.
2. Wound care and healing well are the biggest concerns. This can be slow. Wear the limb guard at all times.
3. Work with physical therapy to get strong enough to move around. Rehab will teach you and your family how to take care of you and make changes in your home, like adding a shower chair or ramp.
4. The amputated leg needs to shrink to fit well in the artificial leg. Wear a shrinker (similar to a tight sock) at all times.
5. About 2 months after surgery, if everything heals well, you can start the process of getting a new leg. A person trained to make artificial legs (prosthetist) will help you.

UNC Health Care Caring for North Carolina



Other Resources

Vascular Clinic—Nurse Line
984-974-5662

Physical Medicine and Rehab Clinic
984-974-9747

UNC Atlantic
Prosthetics and Orthotics
www.uncpo.com
UNC Hospital 984-974-4630
Chapel Hill North 919-945-0215
UNC Center for Rehab 984-974-9714
Siler City 919-945-0215



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Division of Vascular
Surgery

Preparing for a Leg Amputation



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Planning for your Amputation

Having a leg amputation is a big life change, and everyone reacts in different ways. With planning and help, many people have a good recovery with less pain and more movement. This brochure will tell you what to expect before, during and after your operation.

Before Your Operation

1. Be more active before your operation to stay strong.
2. If you smoke, try to smoke less. Every little bit helps with healing!
3. Be prepared to stay in the hospital for 4-5 days.
4. After the hospital, be prepared to go to rehab or a nursing home where you will live while you are getting physical therapy. Be prepared to be away from home for at least 2-4 weeks.
5. The pre-op area is an area in the hospital where you will be cared for when you arrive just before surgery. Here you will get medicines that work in different ways to lessen the pain of surgery. This is known as *multi-modal analgesia*.
 - Studies have shown this lessens the pain after the operation & helps you get better faster.
6. You can also get a nerve block. This is 1 or 2 small tubes placed under the skin that give numbing medicine to the leg during and after surgery.

During Your Operation

1. The nerve block makes your leg numb, so you will not feel anything.
2. You will get medicine, or sedation, to make you sleepy. Usually, this means you do not have to be put under general anesthesia and get a breathing tube. Getting sedation instead of a breathing tube is safer for your heart and lungs.
3. The operation takes about 1.5—2 hours.
4. After your operation, you will be moved to the recovery area. Then, a few hours later, you will be moved to your hospital room.
5. You will have a large wrap on your leg. This wrap stays on for 2 days.



After Your Operation

1. The surgery team and nurses will check on you many times per day.
2. The “pain team” will take care of you, too. Like before surgery, you will get medicines that work in different ways to lessen the pain of surgery. These include nerve block, pain button (also called a PCA), pain pills, and pills to help with phantom limb pain.
 - Phantom limb pain is pain that feels like it is coming from the body part that is no longer there.
3. On the first day after surgery, you will get up with physical therapy and the nurses. You will use a walker or crutches. Do not try to get out of bed without help.
4. You will get a limb guard to protect your leg. A prosthetist, a person trained to make artificial legs, will come talk to you about caring for your leg while you are getting better.
5. A case manager will help you and your family decide which rehab center or nursing home is the best for you.
6. You will follow up with your surgeon around 1 month after surgery.