

# WHEELCHAIR MOBILITY FOLLOWING LIMB LOSS

## LOWER LIMB AMPUTATION IN TASMANIA

Wheelchair mobility is common for people with limb loss following different types of amputation surgery.

### Toe or partial foot amputation

It can take some time for a toe or foot surgery site to heal and it is important during this time that any weightbearing is kept at a minimum.

The reduced or limited weightbearing will look different for each person.

It is important to follow the advice of the podiatrist or healthcare team and you may require the use of offloading devices such as post-operative shoes and crutches or walkers to help with this.

If there are difficulties using these strategies, a wheelchair may be required.

### Leg amputation (also known as below knee or above knee amputation)

After an amputation of your leg, getting around will be different.

It is really important that you have a way of getting out of bed in the first few days after your surgery, as this helps prevent general complications of surgery and helps your recovery.

Your healthcare team may use special ways for you to get in and out of bed; and move from your bed to a chair. A wheelchair will be selected for you, and take into account your size, your balance, and care of your remaining limb.

Be aware that the team will focus on your ability to manage a wheelchair.

They will work with you on how to return to home or another accommodation using a wheelchair.

Guidance will be provided on equipment funding options and any home modifications you are likely to need if returning home.



### Prosthetic (artificial leg) suitability

Rehabilitation teams assess whether a prosthesis or artificial leg is suitable for you.

Some of the considerations are around:

- Age and health conditions
- Physical abilities
- Thinking and cognitive abilities
- Condition of your remaining limbs
- Psychological factors
- Social supports

Rehabilitation team members will discuss your suitability.

Please note that not all people are suitable to manage a prosthesis.

## Prosthetic rehabilitation

If undergoing prosthetic rehabilitation, your wheelchair will still be required.

Most prosthetic rehabilitation in Tasmania is conducted through Outpatient Rehabilitation programs.

Initially the prosthesis remains at the therapy area between sessions.

It takes time to learn how to use a prosthesis.

Your skin and surgical wound healing may also restrict the training process.

Sometimes, during the prosthetic rehabilitation, it may be recognised that your body or abilities may not be able to manage a prosthesis.

Wheelchair or other mobility might suit your needs and goals more than a prosthetic leg.

If prosthetic rehabilitation is successful, access to a wheelchair may still be required for part of your day.



There may be times when you are unable to use your prosthesis and rely on a wheelchair for getting around.

## Cosmetic leg option

Your healthcare team may suggest a cosmetic leg.

A cosmetic leg is only used in a seated position.

It fills the trouser leg on the amputated side and restores physical appearance.

This may be important for you.

## Long-term wheelchair use

Adjusting to life after amputation can be challenging.

It is important to get back to the things you enjoy in life and find your 'new normal'.

Members of your health care team will be able to provide advice on access about your home and community using a wheelchair.



For more information, please visit [www.health.tas.gov.au/amputation](http://www.health.tas.gov.au/amputation)



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**AMPUTATION**  
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Connecting Tasmanians  
to information and  
support for their  
amputation journey