


The Prosthetic Limb Service

*Information for
Patients*

The Leeds Teaching Hospitals 
NHS Trust

In partnership with: Airedale NHS Foundation Trust • Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS
Foundation Trust • Calderdale & Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust • Mid Yorkshire
Hospitals NHS Trust • York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

This booklet has been compiled by the multi-disciplinary teams of a number of Trusts in the West and North Yorkshire region. Feedback and reviews have been provided by patients and the Leeds Regional Centre User Group. We hope it will provide useful information for you and your relations/carers.

The Prosthetic Limb Service

This booklet will provide a general introduction to the Prosthetic Service at Seacroft Hospital Leeds. It will guide you through your first appointment and contains useful information for future reference. We hope it will help to reassure you and answer many of your questions.

Often in the text we have referred to the loss of a limb through an amputation. However, much of the information is also relevant to those with a congenital limb absence.

Our aim is to provide a quality, caring service. The staff at the Specialist Rehabilitation Centre Seacroft are here to help you. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you need assistance of any kind, please do not hesitate to ask.



Telephone numbers

You can get straight through to the departments listed below by dialling these numbers:

Medical, Prosthetic Appointments & General Enquiries:

9am until 4pm: 0113 206 3866

8am until 4pm: 0113 206 3787

Physiotherapy: 0113 206 3639

Occupational Therapy: 0113 206 3729

Nurse: 0113 206 3830

Clinical Psychologist: 0113 206 5897

Patient Affairs: 0113 206 3503

General information

Wheelchairs are available in the prosthetics reception area. All areas of the hospital are wheelchair accessible.

The disabled toilets are fitted with handrails. Baby changing facilities are available, please ask a member of staff.

In accordance with the Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust's policy, the hospital is a No Smoking area. Smoking is not allowed in any part of the hospital buildings. For the comfort and safety of other patients and staff, you are asked not to smoke during your visits to the hospital.

We advise that you do not bring anything of value with you to the Centre, and only have as much cash as necessary. The hospital cannot accept responsibility for the loss of any valuables.

The Prosthetic (limb fitting) department

The Prosthetic Department is open from Monday to Friday between 8am until 4pm. Closed Bank Holidays. Telephone enquiries will be answered between 9am and 4pm.

If you have specific language, or communication needs please contact General Enquiries prior to your visit. If you have any specific care needs, please contact the Nurse. We attempt to ensure our services are accessible to all.

A children's play area is in reception, please supervise children at all times. There is also a designated children's treatment area.

There is a WRVS café by the main hospital entrance where you can buy food and drinks. Opening times are 8am until 4pm. They also offer a morning mobile trolley service within department. You may prefer to bring a drink and snack with you.

If you are diabetic and need to take insulin or tablets during the day, please bring them with you. You should also bring your own food, drink and glucose tablets in case you need them during the journey or while in the department.

Information relating to benefits, relevant organisations and services are displayed in the Prosthetic Department. If you cannot find the information you require, please ask the receptionist.

Please inform us of any change of address or General Practitioner (GP). If you move to a different area you may wish to attend another limb fitting centre. We can give you the address of the centre nearest to your new home, and your medical notes can be transferred.

Please ensure that you tell the receptionist when you arrive at the Department and when you are leaving. The reception staff will book your next appointment, deal with travel claims, ambulance queries and issue visitor and pay and display permits.

Artificial (prosthetic) limbs

The multidisciplinary team are responsible for your medical, emotional and rehabilitation needs. They will discuss with you your rehabilitation needs and ways to enable you to become as independent as possible. Not everyone who has an amputation will receive an artificial limb (prosthesis). Using an artificial limb (prosthesis) requires more energy than walking with your own limb and can be very tiring. Some people are more independent using a wheelchair.

Cosmetic limbs can be supplied from Seacroft Regional Centre for those who are medically not suitable or do not wish to walk on an artificial limb (prosthesis). Cosmetic limbs have no moving parts but give the appearance of having a limb whilst sitting in a chair. These cosmetic limbs can be difficult to suspend from your body comfortably, and often make transfers on and off the toilet more difficult. Your physiotherapist can discuss this option with you.

The Consultant in Rehabilitation medicine will consider your general health, medication and the condition of your operated limb and remaining limb. They will also consider your emotional needs as losing a limb is commonly associated with a period of emotional adjustment which may include feelings of low mood and depression.

If you are going to be fitted with an artificial limb (prosthesis) then you will be allocated a Prosthetist. They are the professionals who are responsible for prescribing, measuring and fitting of your artificial limb. Measuring, casting/scanning and making of the artificial limb normally takes 10 working days. After your appointment for fit and delivery of the limb you will be able to take the leg to your Physiotherapist for training. In future months and years you may regularly see the Prosthetist for adjustments, or monitoring of your artificial limb.

The Nurse is available to change dressings and advise general health issues. A Care Assistant is available to look after your personal needs and to give you any assistance you require.

Few people are able to use an artificial limb correctly without training. Your local Physiotherapist will instruct you on a general exercise programme and muscle strengthening as required. They will teach you how to use the artificial limb correctly for walking. If appropriate you will progress to walking on slopes uneven ground and climbing stairs. If you have not received any physiotherapy input after your initial surgery please contact the Rehabilitation Centre Physiotherapist on 0113 206 36369.

The Occupational Therapist (OT) can liaise with the community staff, local hospitals, work and schools regarding adaptation or equipment which may be required to support your independence.

Upper Limb Service

The Consultant in Rehabilitation medicine, OT and upper limb Prosthetist work with patients of all ages, who have an upper limb absence or amputation. When you receive your first artificial limb/prosthesis, or if you change the type of prosthesis, the OT will give advice and training in its use.

The OT and upper Limb Prosthetist run weekly clinics in order to assess your upper limb needs. They are able to provide a range of upper limb prostheses and advice on managing a range of daily activities.

Getting your first artificial limb

Your first (primary) appointment

You are welcome to bring a relative or friend with you to your prosthetic appointments. If you are coming by ambulance there are certain circumstances in which the relative or friend may travel with you. Please contact appointments to discuss your requirements.

When you arrive at the main hospital please report to the Prosthetics Reception, and at the end of your visit please inform the receptionist you are leaving. If you have travelled by ambulance you will need to wait in the reception area.

At your first Primary appointment you will be seen by the Prosthetics team appropriate for your needs. Please bring a list of your medication, and any medical details relevant to your assessment. Continue to take your normal medication on this day particularly any diuretics. Failure to take your diuretics may result in swelling in your residual limb (stump) and delay in casting for your artificial limb.

Many factors affect whether an artificial limb will enhance your independence. These include heart and chest problems, arthritis and neurological problems including strokes. The Rehabilitation Consultant will ask you about your medical history and any pain you may be experiencing including phantom limb pain.

The team will want to know about your lifestyle, housing, leisure pursuits and work, as these can influence the type of artificial limb appropriate for your needs.

Your Prosthetist will be responsible for casting or measuring you for your artificial limb. There are different types of artificial limb for each level of amputation and these are individually made. The Prosthetist will take a plaster cast, measurement or use a computer scanning system to produce your individual socket.

Fitting and delivery of your artificial leg

Your next appointment will be for the fitting of your artificial leg in around two weeks after your primary appointment. Please bring a pair of comfortable well fitting shoes.

The Prosthetist will ask you to try your artificial leg on and walk between parallel bars to check the fit and comfort. Some adjustments may be required. Your first artificial leg may seem large as it takes time for the amputated site swelling to reduce. The Prosthetist can answer any questions you may have regarding the prosthesis.

Never adjust the artificial leg yourself.

You may take your artificial leg home after the fit delivery appointment but **do not use** until you have seen your Physiotherapist.

Fitting and delivery of your artificial arm

At this appointment you will usually be seen by the Prosthetist and OT. They will give you the opportunity to practise using your artificial arm and answer any questions you may have. Arrangements will be made for you to see the OT again for further practice and to discuss how you are managing everyday tasks.

Follow up appointments

Always bring your artificial limb when attending any appointment at the Centre.

During the first year following your amputation you will be seen regularly by the prosthetics team. If you are having problems and require an extra appointment please contact the appointments section 0113 206 3866.

After the first year we usually leave it up to you to contact the Centre when an appointment is required. It is recommended that you attend once a year for your artificial limb to be checked. Regular medical reviews will be continued for all children and those who have continuing medical problems.

If you are unable to attend an appointment please contact the Centre, to rearrange. If you fail to attend appointments on two occasions and do not contact the Centre, no further appointments will be sent out. It will be your responsibility to contact the Centre for any future appointments.

If you are late for an appointment the Doctor or Prosthetist may not be available, and may need to make an alternative appointment with you.

Please do not arrive at the Centre without an appointment or without contacting us first. Please ring Appointments and arrangements will be made for you to be seen as soon as possible.

Care of your residual limb

It is important to keep your residual limb (stump) clean when wearing an artificial limb. Small amounts of perspiration may build up causing spots or a rash. Wash your stump daily and make sure it is well dried, especially before putting on your artificial limb.

Check your stump daily for signs skin break down or rubbing. Contact either your therapist, district nurse, general practitioner (GP) or any member of the prosthetic team at the Centre if you have any concerns.

If your stump becomes dry apply a gentle cream or lotion after washing. Stroking and handling your stump regularly will help the circulation and to identify any changes.

Your stump will change in shape and size during the first few months. When this happens the socket of your artificial limb may not fit properly, and adjustments may be required. Please contact your Prosthetist to arrange an appointment.

If the socket is loose or poorly fitting do not try to pad the socket, but wear an extra sock temporarily. If the socket is still uncomfortable, great care should be taken when using the artificial limb until the necessary adjustments have been made. A badly fitting socket may damage your stump.

If your stump becomes more swollen or you develop any other problems please arrange an appointment with the Consultant in Rehabilitation medicine or Prosthetist.

Care of your artificial limb

The socket should be wiped out daily, using a damp cloth or non alcohol based wipes and allowed to dry. If the foot or any other part of the artificial limb becomes wet remove the shoe and sock and allow to dry naturally. Never use direct heat to dry the socket.

If the artificial limb becomes noisy or difficult to use contact the Centre to arrange an appointment. If there are no problems with the comfort of the socket, postal repairs can be arranged.

Residual limb (stump) socks are worn to help protect your skin and make your artificial limb comfortable. Change and wash the socks daily or more frequently if required. Do not darn or mend them when they are worn. A wide variety of socks are available free of charge by contacting the Centre.

General advice

Regular exercise is important for good health and your local physiotherapist will advise on what will be suitable for you.

Excessive weight gain or loss will affect the fit of your artificial limb. Eat regular healthy foods and if you require any dietary advice ask the Seacroft Centre Nurse.

You should seriously consider stopping smoking. The affects of smoking can damage you general health and may result in vascular disease progressing in your remaining leg. The team at the Centre would be happy to give you support and advice.

Common questions answered

Do I have to pay for my artificial limb (prosthesis)?

No. All limbs are supplied by the NHS via the Specialised Rehabilitation Centre. The type of limb you receive will be the most appropriate one for you.

What happens if I move to another area?

If you change your address let the Centre know and we will inform you of your nearest Centre.

What happens if my limb needs repairing when I am away?

There are Prosthetic Rehabilitation Centres all over the UK. They should carry out any necessary emergency repairs. You will need to contact them before you go to let them know you have a problem. Ask the reception staff where the nearest centre will be before you travel.

If you are abroad you may be able to have emergency repairs carried out by the National Health Care Scheme, some countries may expect you to pay a contributory cost. For further information leaflet SA30 is available from your local Social Security Office.

Is my first limb a temporary limb?

No. The first limb you are issued with is custom made for you. As your stump matures and changes shape you may need to be re-cast/re scanned for the socket. The type of limb may also be changed to suit your needs.

How long does it take to make an artificial limb?

Your first limb should be made in 10 working days. We'll let you know if it is going to take longer.

How does the limb stay on?

There are a number of ways. It may be a strap, sleeve, belt or suction, whichever is the most appropriate for you.

Will the bone in the bottom of my stump take the weight?

The socket is designed especially for you. The level of your amputation will determine where the pressure is taken. Every effort is made to ensure comfort and protection of your residual stump.

Can I change the shoes I wear?

Yes. This is usually possible. Please ask your Prosthetist to explain this.

Why is the leg so heavy?

It is as light as we can make it but it needs to be strong enough to support your weight. It is probably no heavier than your own leg.

Can I wear the artificial leg in bed?

No. You may damage your stump or your other leg. Remove it at night to check your skin.

Can I swim in it?

No. Certain components within the limb should not be put in water. It is better to learn to swim without a limb. There are artificial limbs designed to be used in wet areas, please discuss with your Prosthetist.

Why are the bones in my stump becoming so prominent?

The muscles in your stump that used to move your lower leg are no longer required and begin to reduce, this makes the bone appear more prominent. It is not usually a problem.

What will I be able to do with my artificial limb?

Anything you want to do and are able to do! This will depend on your general health and fitness. You may also be limited by the amount of pressure the skin on your stump can tolerate.

How long can I wear the leg for?

Everyone's tolerance varies. Please discuss this with your Physiotherapist or Prosthetist and closely follow the advice given.

Can I drive with my artificial limb?

This will depend on many things. You may need to make adaptations to your car. Please discuss this with your local Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist or other members of the team at the Centre.

I am struggling emotionally with what has happened to me, can I get any extra support?

Yes, there is a clinical psychology service at the centre that you can be referred to. If you think this may be helpful, please speak to a member of the team about accessing this service.

Trouble shooting for limb wearers

Loose fitting limb, goes on too easily	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Try an extra sock2. If using 3 socks, ring for an appointment
Limb too tight	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Decrease the number or thickness of the sock you are wearing2. Wear your compression sock for 30 minutes then try again

Painful residual limb	Contact the Centre and ask to speak with a member of the team
Persistent red marking and blistering residuum	Do not wear the limb. Contact the centre
The limb clicks, squeaks	Arrange an appointment
Worn straps on the limb	Contact the Centre for replacements. You will need to bring the limb in
Stiff knee lock	Contact the Centre and make an appointment to have it checked
If the limb gets wet	Remove shoe and sock and allow to dry naturally
Loose or too tight compression sock	Contact your local physiotherapist or the Centre for a replacement

Travelling to the Centre

By train

To Leeds City Station then bus number 56 (Metro, turquoise line) from Eastgate in Leeds city centre.

By bus

A number of buses stop near to the hospital. For further details, please ring the Metro bus information line on 0113 245 7676. If you need assistance from the main gate to the prosthetic department, please report to the Lodge building at the main entrance of the hospital.

By car

Parking is available outside the Specialist Rehabilitation Centre reception. If you require any assistance from your car please inform the staff at the Lodge situated at the main entrance of the hospital.

By ambulance

Ambulance transport is available for people who have a medical need in line with the agreed Patient Transport Services protocol. Where an ambulance has been booked for you, this will be stated on your appointment letter. Should your transport be delayed, we will still do our best to see you in the Prosthetic Department. Your requirement for an ambulance will be regularly reviewed.

Travelling expenses

Some people can get help with the cost for travelling to the Centre. Further information is given in the Department of Health leaflet '*Help with health costs*' (HC11).

Forms for the reclaiming of expenses are available from Patient Affairs.

If you receive a War pension because of your amputation, you can clarify the amount which you can claim by contacting Patient Affairs on 0113 206 3503 or 0113 206 3204.

Glossary of terms

Artificial limb/prosthesis An artificial replacement of a body part

Casting The process of using plaster of paris bandages on the residual limb to make a mould of the residual limb

Clinical Psychologist Health professional who is concerned with how people's emotions, thoughts, relationships and behaviour affect their rehabilitation

Compression sock A sock designed to reduce swelling and help the shape of the residual limb

Congenital An abnormal condition present at birth

Early walking aid Temporary practice limb to use in physiotherapy

Multidisciplinary team (MDT) A group of healthcare professionals who are involved with your care

Occupational Therapist Health professional who is concerned with the functional and environmental aspects of rehabilitation

Orthotist Health professional responsible for providing your orthotic needs and specialised footwear

Phantom sensations Sensation of the limb which has been removed

Physiotherapist Health professional who is concerned in the physical aspect of your rehabilitation, and walking training with your prosthetic limb

Podiatrist Health professional concerned with the care of your remaining foot

Prosthetist Health professional who prescribes, measures, casts or uses a computer scanner to make your artificial limb (prosthesis). They are also responsible for your on-going care regarding your artificial limb while you continue to be a limb wearer

Rehabilitation Medical Physician A doctor concerned with your general medical health and pain control

Residual limb The remainder of the amputated limb, often known as your stump

Comments and complaints

If you have any positive or negative suggestions please complete a comments card available at reception or talk to a member of staff. A private room is available for confidential discussions or examinations.

If you have a complaint please discuss the matter with the person you are seeing at the Centre. If you'd prefer to talk to someone else, please ask to speak to the Clinical Manager. The Rehabilitation Services Manager is also available to discuss any areas of concern but this may require an appointment.

A poster is displayed in reception which identifies senior staff members within the service who will be able to assist.

Complaints can be raised and processed through the Trust complaints procedure, Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0113 206 6261.

Useful Contacts

Seacroft Specialist Rehabilitation Centre

Seacroft Hospital
York Road, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS14 6UH
Tel: 0113 20 63866
www.leedsth.nhs.uk

William Merritt Disabled Living Centre

St Mary's Hospital
Armley, Leeds, LS12 3QE
Tel: 0113 305 5332

British Limbless Ex Service Men's Association (BLESMA)

The national charity for limbless serving and ex service men and women and their dependants and widows.

185-187 High Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex,
RM6 6NA

Tel: 020 8590 1124

www.blesma.org

Limbless Association

Offer support to individuals of any age or background, whether they are about to have an amputation or are already living with congenital or acquired limb loss. Also offer help and advice to carers, family members and friends.

Unit 16, Waterhouse Business Centre
2 Cromar Way, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 2QE

Tel: 0800 644 0185

www.limbless-association.org

REACH

Association for children with upper limb deficiency
PO Box 54, Helston, Cornwall, TR13 8WD

Tel: 0845 1306 225

www.reach.org.uk

STEPS

Association for children with lower limb deficiency
Wright House, Crouchley Lane, Lymm, Cheshire, WA13 0AS

Tel: 01925 750271

www.steps-charity.org.uk

Limb Power

Whitecroft, Tandridge Lane, Lingfield, Surrey, RH7 6LL

Tel: 07502 276858

www.limbpower.com

Disabled Living Foundation

380-384 Harrow Road, London, W9 2HU

Tel: 020 7289 6111, 9am - 5pm, Mon-Fri

www.dlf.org.uk

DVLA - Drivers Medical Group

Swansea, SA99 1DF

Tel: 0300 790 6806

www.direct.gov.uk

Age UK

Travis House, 1-6 Travistock Square, London
WC1H 9NA

Tel: 0800 169 6565

www.ageuk.org.uk

Citizens Advice

Myddelton House, 115-123 Pentonville Road,
London, N1 9LZ

www.adviceguide.org.uk/

Diabetes UK

Macleod House, 10 Parkway, London, NW1 7AA

Tel: 020 7424 1000

www.diabetes.org.uk

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