

How to Care For Yourself after Amputation (Above Knee or Below Knee)

What are my discharge instructions?

- Take pain medications as prescribed so you are comfortable. This may include medicine for Phantom Limb pain. Phantom sensation is normal; pain is not.
- Visiting Nurse(s) will call you during the first 48 hours at home to schedule a visit and/or physical therapy (PT). These services are arranged before you go home.

What activities should I perform?

- Exercise and activity:
 - Maintain and advance your activity at the time of discharge.
 - Physical Therapy - as prescribed by therapist.
 - Do knee/hip joint range of motion (ROM) at least 3 times daily.
- Plan rest periods throughout the day.
- No pillows under residual limb/knee.
- Elevate your residual limb to avoid swelling from a dependent position (sitting up for a long time).
- Check your remaining leg/foot/toes for any changes every day.
- Return to work: Discuss this with your provider before going home or at your first return visit.
- Driving: No driving while taking narcotics or other medicines which make you less alert. You may need occupational assessment, training, and possibly auto renovations before driving again.

How should I care for the Incision Site?

- At the time you leave the hospital, you will have an incision - with staples or sutures (stitches). Staples/sutures stay in place 3-8 weeks or longer depending on how your incision is healing.
- Check your incision every day; wash it with soap and water and pat dry.
 - Do not use powders, lotions, or gels on incision unless told to do so by your provider.
- Check for redness, drainage, sores at incision, increased swelling or a change in color.
 - Before you go home, look at your incision in the mirror and be sure to check on all sides. That way you will know if there are changes when you check it at home.
- You may shower if you have been cleared by physical therapy and have the proper safety equipment in place. No tub baths until cleared by your provider.
- At your first post-op visit, your incision will be checked to decide about removing your staples/sutures. In some cases, your Primary Care Provider may remove your staples/sutures. For your comfort, take pain medication or bring some to the appointment.
- Your incision may feel thickened and raised. This will decrease over time (6-12 months).
- For optimal healing, keep incision/scar away from sunlight for 6 months.
- Once your scar heals, you may be asked to do gentle massage of your scar; this prevents the tissue from adhering to underlying bone.
- Rigid Removal Device (RRD): you will be given instructions for care and use when you are fitted for the RRD (in the hospital or later).
- You will be fitted for a shrinker sock while in the hospital or at a later time. Wear your shrinker sock as directed.

What should I expect?

- You may tire easily or feel fatigued after your surgery. It takes time to gain strength and mobility until you are fitted for your prosthesis. These symptoms are normal and related to surgery and your recovery.
- Phantom sensation is expected.

What will my follow-up care include?

- Your first post-op visit with your surgeon is usually scheduled 3-6 weeks after discharge. If you do not have a discharge appointment, phone the “CVC Call Center” at 1-888-287-1082 and they will help you.
- Your first post-operative visit with Physical Medicine and Rehab (PMR) physician is 6 to 8 weeks after discharge (after you have seen your surgeon). The timing of this visit may depend on the healing of your incision.
- You may need to call your Primary Care Physician (PCP) once you are discharged to re-establish care. If you do not get your prosthesis care at UM, ask you PCP for a local referral.

When should I call for further care?

Call (number below) for any of the following:

- Fever more than 101.5F (38.6C)
- Incision/wound has:
 - Excessive redness that goes beyond the incision
 - Bright red blood or thick yellow/white (pus) drainage
 - Odor
 - Is warm/hot to touch
- Excessive pain (Not controlled with medication) or increasing pain
- Any part of operated limb becomes cold/painful
- Injury/Trauma to your residual limb

Who should I call?

For questions about this procedure, call:

1-888-287-1082, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (Vascular Surgery Clinic - Nursing & Appointments Line)

After hours and on weekends, call Hospital Paging at 734-936-6267 and ask for the Vascular Surgery Resident on call.

Disclaimer: This document is for informational purposes only and is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Talk with your doctor if you have Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options.

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