

A STEP AHEAD

WINTER EDITION 2024



Amputees
Queensland

CENTRAL OFFICE

Ben Mathews Playground Community Centre
47-55 Ellen Street, Logan Central Qld 4114
PO Box 31, Kingston Qld 4114

Monday to Thursday 9:00am to 4:30 pm
Friday 9:00am to 2:30pm

T: 07 3290 4293 | W: www.afsg.org.au
E: admin@afsg.org.au or lynda@afsg.org.au



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[amputees_queensland](https://www.instagram.com/amputees_queensland)



www.inhouseprint.com.au

We would like to thank InHouse Print & Design for the printing of our quarterly newsletter. Please contact them for all your printing requirements.

Disclaimer: Amputees Queensland Inc does not provide specific medical advice or endorse any specific treatment, technology, company or device. Consumers are advised to consult with their healthcare professionals.

From the Office!

Welcome to the Winter Edition of A Step Ahead!!

It already feels like winter with these cold mornings, but I must admit I prefer the cooler weather after the hot summer we have had!



I would like to give a special mention to Judi Corrigan who volunteers in the office several days a week as well as being our Secretary. Judi was nominated and acknowledged at the Logan City Council Volunteer Awards and I would like to congratulate her and thank her for all her hard work and dedication to Amputees Queensland.

We have lots of new faces joining our Facebook group *Amputees Qld - Peer Support*, the group is for online help and support. The group is specifically created for Queenslanders living with amputation or limb differences, their family or friends who need help, information and support from fellow amputees in your State. As always you can still contact the office for any help or information you require.

Most recently we started a FREE adaptive exercise program which is available for all abilities. On Tuesdays we have Tai Chi and then on Thursdays we have a Fun & Fit class. The programs are suitable for either standing or sitting and the sessions are run by fully qualified professionals.

If you are interested in exercise physiology then this amazing opportunity is for you. On Thursday, 6 June we start an exercise physiology program for 5 weeks and at the end of the program you will receive an individual at home program. Please see our flyer on page 16 for further information.

We have also partnered with CQ University to offer our members free Chiropractic care. The students are in their final year and will work with a clinician during the appointments, please contact the office or check our website and Facebook pages for updates, this will commence from 2 July.

All our events, information sessions and news is kept updated on our website, socials and e-news.

If you would like to share your amputation or limb difference journey you can contact me at the office or via email lynda@afsg.org.au. The sharing of your journey helps to raise awareness of amputation or limb loss, it help support individuals who have just lost a limb by seeing the accomplishments, resilience and strength that people have and how they find new ways to accomplish every day tasks.

Lastly, but most importantly, we are happy to announce that we have continued funding from Queensland Health until 30 June 2029.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynda'.

Lynda Tilley | State Coordinator

Amputations in Australia

Limb amputation is one of the earliest forms of surgery, allowing a person to survive severe injuries and infections. Historically the main causes of amputation were trauma and wound infections.

However in first world countries trauma is no longer the main cause of amputations because:

- Emergency medicine has greatly improved and more limbs are saved because a person can be transported to hospital quickly.
- Some amputated limbs can now be reattached with microsurgery.
- The number of workplace accidents have dropped significantly due to Health and Safety laws.
- Surgical sterilisation techniques and antibiotics control most infections.

In a modernised country such as Australia the main causes of amputations are vascular disease and diabetes. Other causes of amputation are traumatic injuries, infections, tumours and congenital deformities.

Vascular Disease: Vascular disease occurs when the arteries in the legs become blocked. This condition can happen to anyone but is more severe in patients with diabetes. The narrowed arteries prevent the heart from pumping enough oxygenated blood to the feet, resulting in severe pain in the legs, foot ulcerations and ultimately gangrene of the toes/foot.

Diabetes: Diabetes is the cause of half of the amputations performed in Queensland. Diabetes does not just increase the severity of vascular disease it also reduces feeling in the feet and slows wound healing; resulting in foot ulcers. People with diabetes are more prone to skin infections and gangrene or sepsis may occur, resulting in amputation.



Trauma: Trauma resulting in amputation is most frequently related to motorcycle, motor vehicle and industrial accidents.

Other causes are home accidents and burns. Most upper limb amputations are caused by traumatic injury. Trauma is the most common cause of amputation for young adults. ♥

A man with a prosthetic left leg is running on a paved path. He is wearing a light blue short-sleeved shirt, dark shorts, and a watch on his left wrist. His prosthetic leg is black and silver. The background shows a scenic view of a river and trees under a clear sky.

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DATES FOR THE DIARY

JUNE

5th Fitter for Life
16th Sunshine Coast Group*
17th Bundaberg Group**
19th Carer Information
29th Grocery Bingo

JULY

3rd Navigating Aged Care
15th Bundaberg Group**
19th Christmas in July
21st Sunshine Coast Group*
24th Grocery Bingo
31st Advanced Planning

AUGUST

7th Information session TBA
15th Bundaberg Group**
18th Sunshine Coast Group*
28th Grocery Bingo
31st Annual General Meeting & lunch



Tai Chi Tuesdays

Tai Chi enhances balance, strength and coordination as well as physical and mental health. Join Phil Hopes from Hopes in Motion for a morning of FREE fully adaptive seated or standing Tai Chi, meet new people and have some fun!

You will need a water bottle, small towel and wear nice comfortable clothing that is easy to move in.

Every Tuesday 9:30am -10:30am



Fun & Fit Thursdays

Fun & Fit Thursdays will bring you a fun movement program and social opportunity aiming to help improve your mobility, strength and coordination. This is a FREE fully adaptive program.

You will need a water bottle, small towel and wear nice comfortable clothing that is easy to move in.

Every Thursday 9:30am -10:30am

All sessions will be at our offices at Ben Matthews Playground Community Centre, Logan Central unless otherwise marked.

* Sunshine Coast Support Group Get Together's will be held at Maroochy River Golf Club, 374-514 David Low Way, Bli Bli at 10am. Please RSVP sunshinecoast@afsg.org.au or call 0475 052 980.

** TQ's Café, 6 Killer Street, Norville. RSVP Jan Baldock—0409 492 363

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Travelling...need help?

Hidden Disabilities - the Sunflower

Airports are busy environments and for some people this can be a stressful experience. If you or someone you are travelling with has a hidden or invisible disability, you can collect a sunflower lanyard to wear through Brisbane Airport. Wearing the lanyard when you are at the airport is a way for you to indicate to staff that you may need a little extra help, guidance or time with the airport process.

The Sunflower lanyards are for people with:

- sensory loss, including difficulty seeing or hearing,
- a physical disability that may not be obvious,
- autism,
- a learning disability; and
- anxiety or any other mental health condition.



Brisbane Airport staff and other airports throughout Australia and the world have been trained to recognise the sunflower lanyard and to provide you with any help you may need at that stage of your journey through the airport. For example: if you are feeling overwhelmed we can slow down the process, keep things quiet, offer assurance and be as accommodating as possible.

If you require further medical or concierge assistance at the Brisbane Airport, other than the complimentary support services your airline offers, Medical Travel Companions may be another option.

Medical Travel Companions

Medical Travel Companions offer comprehensive assistance services for passengers travelling through Brisbane Airport requiring additional or specific care.



Qualified companions provide support for passengers in transit, flight or a full concierge services for the elderly, families, children, passengers with disabilities, individuals recovering from surgery or injury as well as passengers who need assistance or companionship

This is a fully flexible service with the ability to tailor a solution to suit everyone's needs.

Brisbane Airport also have an Accessibility Journey Planner to help with any accessibility requirements you may require as a passenger or visitor at Brisbane Airport.

For more travel information please visit the Brisbane Airport



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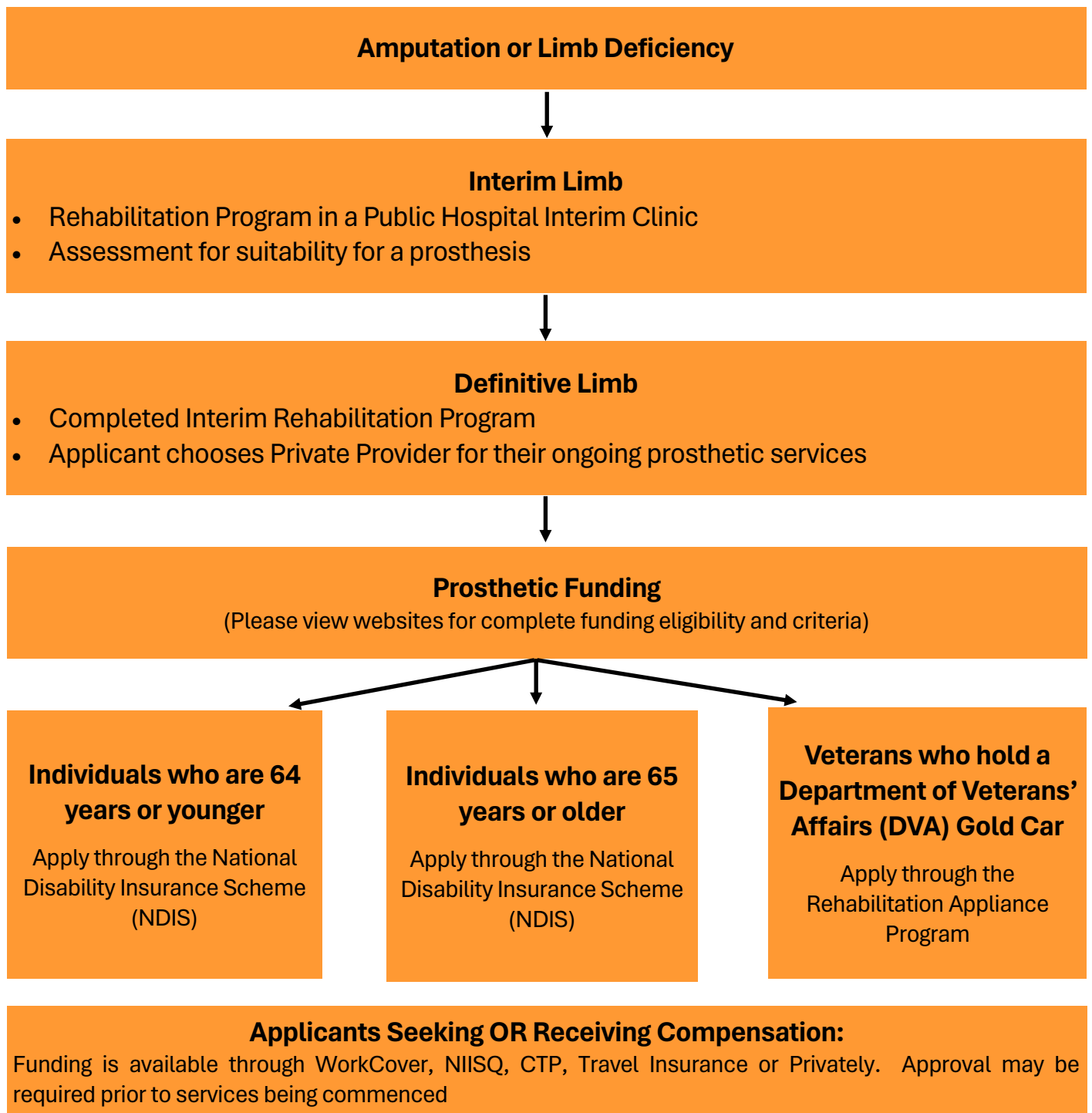
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Amputation - What happens next?

Prosthetic Funding Information



A list of Prosthetic Service Providers, Artificial Limb Schemes and Funding Services are available on:

health.qld.gov.au/mass/prescribe/artificial-limbs/qals-groups

Reference:
Queensland Artificial Limb Scheme



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K Levels - What are They?

We all have different levels of mobility depending on things like our age, our physical condition and the demands of our daily lives. So when it comes to prosthetic legs, the component selection needs to be guided by your particular circumstances and functional ability.

To help in this process, mobility levels have been developed through classifications known as the "K-Levels." All prosthetic components are assigned a corresponding K-Level, and based on your personal K-Level, your prosthetist can select the right components for your needs.

The K-Level Scoring

K-Level 0: Does not have the ability to ambulate or transfer without assistance and a prosthesis may enhance quality of life but not mobility.

K-Level 1: Has the ability or potential to use a prosthesis for transfers or ambulation on level surfaces at fixed cadence. Typical of the limited and unlimited household ambulator.

K-Level 2: Has the ability or potential for ambulation with the ability to traverse low level environment barriers such as curbs, stairs or uneven surfaces. Typical of the average community ambulator

K-Level 3: Has the ability or potential for ambulation with variable cadence. Typical of the community ambulator, who has the ability to traverse most environmental barriers, and may have vocational, therapeutic or exercise activity that demands prosthetic use beyond simple locomotion. Typical of the prosthetic demands of the child and active adult.

K-Level 4: Has the ability or potential for prosthetic ambulation that exceeds basic



ambulation skills, exhibiting high impact, stress or energy levels. Typical of the prosthetic demands of the regular athlete.

Determining your K level

K-level testing will be completed by a physiotherapist in the Amputee Clinic and is done through a series of testing using the Amputee Mobility Predictor Assessment Tool (AMPAT). A copy of the AMPAT is available on health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0040/939964/QALS-Clinic-AMPAT.pdf

There are 21 tasks to undertake as part of the testing and they range from sitting in a chair for 60 seconds, balancing for 5 seconds to 30 seconds, measuring the distance that you walk to turning 180 degrees when returning to a chair. At the end you will be given a score and this is what gives you your K-level score.

To be eligible for a definitive prosthesis you will need to complete an AMPAT and received your K-level. K-levels are used for your prosthetic with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or Queensland Artificial Limb Scheme (QALS) funding.

Reference:
Ossur/k-levels
Queensland Artificial Limb Scheme

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Fun & Fitness

Join our FREE five week exercise physiologist run program with BeActive.

This is a fully adaptive and individualised program where week one will have each participant undertaking basic testing. The program will run for five weeks with further testing in the final week so you can see how far you have come! Each person will leave with an individualised home workout program.

Fun & Fitness is a **Healthy Ageing Hub** event, supporting improved health outcomes for older people.

The first 20 people who register to attend will receive a sports bag with easily usable equipment for home.

Dates: Starts Thursday, 6 June 2024

Where: Ben Matthews Playground Community Centre
47-55 Ellen Street, Logan Central

Time: 9:30am to 10:30am

RSVP: Please contact Lynda on 3290 4293 or email
admin@afsg.org.au

This activity is supported by funding from the Australian Government through Brisbane South PHN.



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Phantom Limbs & Pain

Phantom limbs and pain are still poorly understood in the medical community. It was thought that both were psychological conditions caused by an amputee's emotional reaction to limb loss. Once amputees' brains were scanned in MRI machines it was found that the brain and nervous system is involved.

Understanding the human brain is still in the early stages and no definitive cause of phantom limbs and pain has been found, however new research on the brain's ability to adapt has led to several theories on these sensations. For a long time it was believed that an adult brain was in a fixed state but research has shown that adult brains do try to adapt to their surroundings and rewire their connections.

Phantom limbs

When an amputee can still feel their missing limb it is referred to as phantom limb. Current theories on the causes of phantom limbs are the brain filling in missing information using memory of prior experiences. In phantom limbs the brain has the memory of the limb so nerve impulses are still triggered after the limb is amputated causing various painless sensations including:

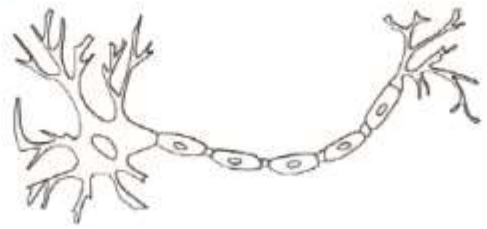
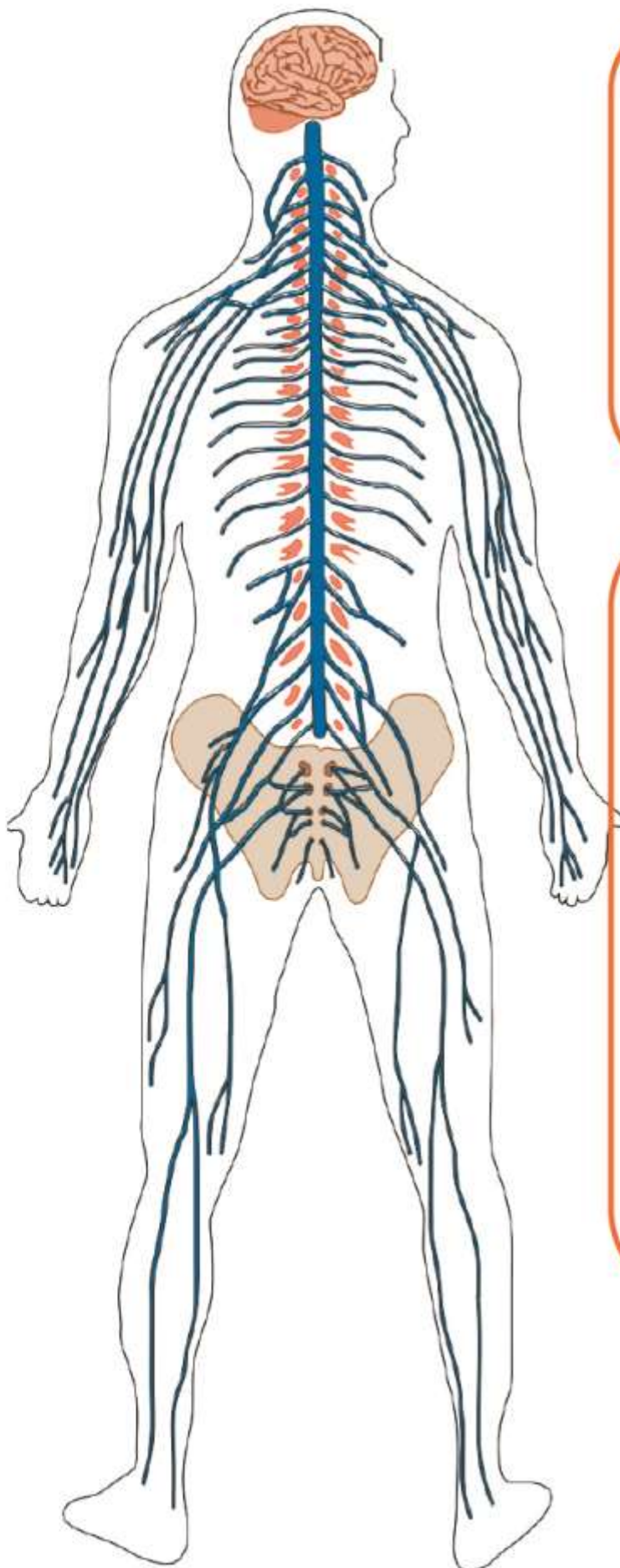
- the amputated limb behaving as a fully functioning limb.
- the amputated limb is gradually shrinking back into the body.
- the amputated limb is moving itself about.
- feelings of heat, cold, itching or tingling in the amputated limb.

The feeling of the amputated limb can be so real that amputees have injured themselves trying to stand up or walk on the phantom limb. This usually happens when waking suddenly from deep sleep.

Phantom limb sensations are proving to be useful in the design of high-tech prosthetic limbs that detect nerve sensations to initiate movement. Amputees with traditional prosthetic limbs report that phantom limb sensations can be used to control a prosthetic limb as the prosthetic and phantom limbs feel as if they are working together resulting in a prosthetic limb that is easier to control.



Phantom Limbs & Pain cont.



Neurons in the brain send and receive messages to and from limb nerves. Amputation does not alter these neurons so they try to function as normal.

Knowledge of the brain and nervous system is not as advanced as other body systems so phantom pain and limbs are not well understood. The image on the left is a basic diagram of nerve pathways. The actual numbers involved are massive:

- There are 100 billion neurons in the brain sending and receiving messages to other parts of the body.
- There are 100 trillion connections between neurons.
- Nerve messages travel at speeds of up to 430 kilometres per hour.
- If the larger nerves were placed end to end an adult has enough to wrap around the earth's equator 4 times

Phantom Limbs & Pain cont.

Phantom pain

Phantom pain causes amputees to feel pain as if the amputated limb was still present. Initially neuromas were blamed for the condition and while neuromas play a role they are not the sole cause of phantom pain.

The current theories for the cause of phantom pain involve the brain becoming confused after the amputation and attempting to recreate the sensation of the missing limb. Those who had long term pain prior to amputation may find that the brain recreates what it has become accustomed to feeling, resulting in phantom pain sensations.

In those who did not have prior limb pain the brain may be creating pain to signal that there is a problem with the limb in that it cannot locate it. In this case pain is a rudimentary response to tell you that something is not right. Other contributors to phantom pain are damaged nerve endings and scar tissue on the stump. Most cases of phantom pain will have several of the aforementioned factors involved.

Phantom pain falls into 3 broad categories: cramping, burning and stabbing. These pains may be persistent or intermittent.

Some amputees find that the pains are triggered by certain activities such as yawning, coughing or changes in temperature. Other amputees find that the pain will become more prominent when they are stressed, feeling depressed or having trouble sleeping.

The severity of phantom pain can be reduced by maintaining pain control prior to an elective amputation and by early rehabilitation following amputation. Many patients who suffer from phantom pain notice that it can be controlled fairly well during the day when they are active.

However it causes problems when they are trying to sleep. If you are troubled by phantom pain, it is important to consult a doctor who is experienced in treating it. Often it does not need any treatment besides early mobilisation.

There are several ways to treat phantom pain including medications, physical therapies, behavioural training and psychological therapies. The same treatment options do not work for everyone so you need to discuss your individual situation with your primary care doctor.

Phantom pain is almost impossible to eliminate completely, so you and your doctor may need to focus on ways to cope with chronic pain. Difficult to treat cases may require referral to a pain management specialist or clinic.



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Where: Ben Matthews Playground Community Centre
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When: Friday, 12 July 2024

Cost: \$15 per person (m) | \$25 per person (nm)

Time: 11:30am for 12pm lunch

RSVP: Monday, 8 July 2024 on 3290 4293 or email
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1st prize: \$100 gift voucher

2nd prize: \$50 gift voucher

3rd prize: \$25 gift voucher

All memberships paid between 1 June and 30 August 2024 will automatically be entered into the draw!

The prizes will be drawn at our Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 31 August 2024 at 1:00pm

Winner will be notified by phone.



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for membership and/or donation.

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