Why is exercise important?

Engaging in regular physical activity significantly enhances your wellbeing and helps you live longer. Exercise boosts your mood, increases your energy levels and self-confidence. Exercise also helps manage your weight, which is important for sustained prosthetic fit and comfort. Additionally, exercising is a fantastic way to socialise and meet others with similar abilities and interests.

Expectations

If you have not participated in physical activity and sport for a while, it is important to have realistic expectations about what you can achieve and how quickly. Even small amounts of exercise can have meaningful benefits, such as being in nature, spending time with friends, and creating shared memories. LimbPower are here to help! Why not talk to LimbPower's reVAMP team or our Sports Development Officers for guidance on getting started or ask your limb centre physiotherapist.

The Benefits

Activity is not just about becoming physically stronger or changing the way you look. It can also help improve your coordination, balance, agility, concentration, stamina, speed, and reaction times, by using different parts of your brain. It can help reduce stress, and you may sleep better too. For recent amputees, it can also give you a huge boost to your self-esteem and a better understanding of how wonderful your body is. These physical and mental benefits enable you to spend time with those you love, keep doing what you are passionate about, and support your local community.

Sport and physical activity have many positive benefits for all people, and for those with an amputation there are additional considerations. Physical activity can help you maintain a healthy and stable weight, as gaining or losing weight has a major impact on prosthetic fitting.

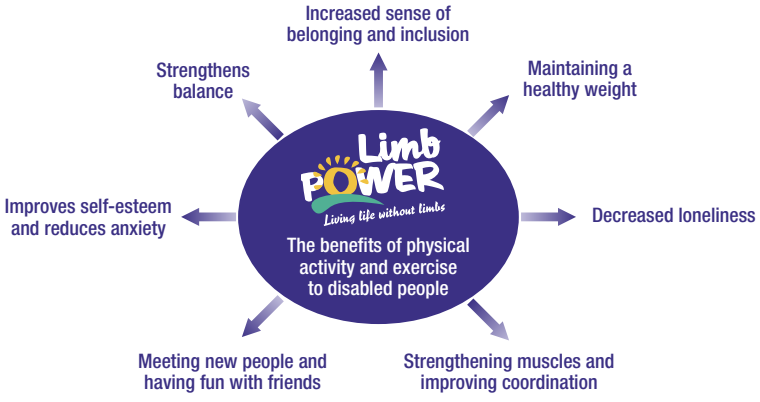
For amputees with diabetes, pre-diabetes, or cardiovascular disease, exercise can help manage these conditions. For those with vascular disease, it can reduce symptoms like breathlessness, angina, and intermittent claudication pain. Improved blood circulation through exercise can better control Type 2 diabetes.

For non-vascular amputees, exercise helps prevent disease. A healthy, well-balanced diet also aids in diabetes prevention.

The risks of inactivity

The less active you are, and the more time you spend sedentary without breaks, the more it impacts your health. Your circulation, cardiovascular fitness, and flexibility all reduce. People who sit at desks all day often find their body tight when they move.

But the good news is that any increase in activity makes a difference, so start small and build up, and you will quickly see a difference. LimbPower have all the resources you need to get you started.



Some of the most noticeable benefits of physical activity for amputees include:

- Maintaining a healthy and stable weight. Gaining or losing weight has a major impact on prosthetic fitting.
- For non-vascular amputees, exercise reduces the risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease. A healthy, well-balanced diet also helps prevent diabetes.

The role of nutrition

Proper nutrition is essential for amputees to maintain energy levels, manage weight, and support overall health. A balanced diet rich in proteins, vitamins, and minerals is crucial for muscle maintenance, healing, and preventing complications. Hydration supports metabolic processes and helps regulate body temperature, especially

Continued overleaf ➤

Why is exercise important?

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during exercise. Addressing weight fluctuations is important for optimal prosthetic fit and comfort. Good nutrition and regular exercise positively affect the skeletal system and help prevent osteopenia and osteoporosis. For tailored advice, consult healthcare professionals. For more information, refer to the NHS's Eatwell Guide. **www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/**

Why not use LimbPower's amputee BMI calculator tailored specifically for amputees and individuals with limb differences? Our calculator factors in the absence of limbs, delivering more precise and reliable BMI results. How it works: input your height, weight, and level of impairment (left leg, right leg, left arm, or right arm). The calculator then crunches the numbers, providing you with a relevant BMI score. Check it out here: **www.limbpower.com/exercise/new-amputee-bmi-calculator**

Physical activity and mental wellbeing

Having an amputation can impact your emotional wellbeing and have negative psychological effects, including depression and anxiety. Exercising releases neurotransmitters and endorphins, which improve your mood and enhance your sense of wellbeing.

Exercise significantly boosts emotional wellbeing by reducing feelings of isolation and providing a sense of community. Group activities and sports improve mood and foster social connections, crucial for emotional support and resilience. Many amputees find it beneficial to participate in group activities with other amputees who may have had similar experiences. LimbPower's reVAMP programme includes these discussions to support amputees through their exercise journey. While physical activity can improve your emotional health, if you feel like you need more support or information, please download our resource on mental health helplines and support or contact our Outreach Officer. **www.limbpower.com/application/files/3216/4553/6547/MENTAL_HEALTH_HELPLINES_AND_SUPPORT.pdf**

Prosthetic equipment

There is a misconception that you need a sport-specific prosthetic (blade) to exercise. You do not need a special limb or blade to perform most physical activities. When starting any form of exercise, your everyday leg is likely to be sufficient. If you are a below-the-knee amputee, you can request an everyday prosthetic designed to support physical activity. You can also ask for a second limb if it performs a different function from the primary prosthetic.

For above-knee amputees, this is more complex. However, many sports and exercises have been adapted for disabled people that you can participate in locally, regionally, and nationally. It is advisable to discuss your prosthetic requirements for physical activity with your prosthetist and physiotherapist, as different knees have different functionality, and some will be more suitable than others for your chosen activity.

Once you have increased your fitness and competence you might find that you need a sport specific limb.

After some research LimbPower has produced two factsheets that highlight the activities which require a specialist limb/s.

Physical Activity and Sport Matrices for Upper Limb Amputees
https://www.limbpower.com/resources/info-sheets/

Physical Activity and Sport Matrices for Lower Limb Amputees
https://www.limbpower.com/resources/info-sheets/

LimbPower suggests you discuss any changing need in activity with your rehabilitation consultant and prosthetist, who can advise if an alternative prescription might be advantageous.

Please note:
Before embarking on exercise or physical activity seek advice from your G.P., Rehabilitation Consultant or healthcare providers.

LimbPower, Whitecroft, Tandridge Lane, Lingfield, Surrey RH7 6LL T: 07502 276858 E: david@limbpower.com W: www.limbpower.com

LimbPower exists to engage amputees and individuals with limb impairments in regular and sustained participation in physical activity, sport and the arts to improve quality of life and to aid physical, social and psychological rehabilitation. To find out more about how we can help you, visit our website. LimbPower CIO Registered Charity No: 1180906.

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