

# Overcoming barriers to participation



## Why is it important?

**Participation in sport among people with a disability is increasing, but there is still an imbalance between sports participation among disabled and non-disabled people. 18.5% of disabled people currently play sport on a weekly basis compared to 39.2% of non-disabled people: only 17.9% of people with a physical impairment participant in sport on a weekly basis.**

What is preventing people with amputations and other physical impairments from participating in sport? What are the barriers and can you overcome them?

### What are the physical barriers?

Physical barriers cited by disabled people include a lack of accessible equipment, accessible facilities and health and safety. We know of amputees who have been told that they can't train at a gym because the instructors don't know how to teach them or because the staff are worried about health and safety. The good news is that things are changing and through the Inclusive Fitness Initiative, which now has over 400 IFI Mark accredited gym facilities, with accessible facilities amputees and those with a limb impairment have more access to physical activity.

[www.efds.co.uk/inclusive\\_fitness](http://www.efds.co.uk/inclusive_fitness).

### What are the logistical barriers?

Logistical barriers cited by disabled people include geography, the expense of taking part, support of others, lack of communication and suitability of facilities. Charities like LimbPower and the other National Disability Sports Organisations,

organise participation events for adults and children with limb impairments in a safe, friendly and conducive environment, where you can participate among people with similar disabilities, run by qualified coaches who have experience of working with amputees or those with a limb impairment. LimbPower run our events at a hugely reduced cost making them accessible and inexpensive. For more information on LimbPower events and activities visit the LimbPower website. [www.limbpower.com](http://www.limbpower.com).

### What are the psychological barriers?

Psychological barriers listed by disabled people include: personal perception, lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem negative body image and the perception of others. Lack of confidence and self-belief prevent many disabled people from even considering taking part in physical activity and sport. Taking that first step is incredibly daunting, which is why LimbPower organise events like the Introduction to Sports Workshops, The Advanced Rehabilitation Event, The LimbPower Games and the Primary and Junior Games. These events are designed to introduce amputees of all ages and all abilities to physical activity and sport in a safe, relaxed and friendly environment among peers.

*"I attended the Advanced Rehabilitation event at Roehampton University in 2015. It was the first event I had ever attended as a new amputee and I was very nervous. It was amazingly liberating doing practical physical exercises with fellow amputees – we all have similar mobility problems and any embarrassment that I might have felt in a roomful of able bodied people was*

*instantly dispelled. The workshop led by the 2 sports psychologists was very empowering as I was able to express my anger and sorrow for the first time with people who had shared a similar experience and who were incredibly supportive and encouraging. I returned home a changed woman. As I walked through the front door, I called to my family "I'm back" and I meant it both physically and psychologically as I'd finally glimpsed the possibility of a happier future in spite of my altered physical capabilities. I entirely underestimated how much I needed the help and support of fellow amputees.*

*Attending the Advanced Rehab event and making some new friends, gave me the confidence to register for the LimbPower Games. I had previously seen publicity for the games but had wrongly assumed that it was an event for "sporty" people which I am not. I am so happy that I attended. All I needed was an open mind and a willingness to give things a go! It didn't even matter that my prosthetic was ill fitting or that my hand to eye co-ordination isn't the best. It turned my life around and brought me back to life in a way that I never thought was possible.*  
**Suzanne Bell, Above knee amputee**

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