



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT AMPUTATION

## Deciding on Surgery

- **Does my child have to have an amputation?**
  - The answer to this question is almost always “no.” If an amputation is presented as a treatment option for your child, it’s because your treatment team feels that an amputation is a way to help him/her be as highly functioning as possible, relieve pain, and reduce the number of surgeries that he or she may have to go through. All treatment options will always be discussed with you.
- **It seems like an amputation is the best option for me/my child, but there are several different options available. How do I decide which to choose?**
  - Every situation is unique, and your treatment team will go over the differences between the options with you. There are a few things that you should consider: which option is likely to be the most comfortable, which is likely to be the most functional, and which am I comfortable with the appearance of?
- **I don’t know anyone who is an amputee. Is it possible to meet someone to ask them some questions and see what their life is like?**
  - Absolutely, we encourage and try to facilitate this. A number of our current/prior patients have graciously offered to be contacted by families deciding about whether to have an amputation, and we can try to put you in touch with someone. Please ask if this interests you.

## What to Expect from Surgery

- **Will my child be completely asleep for the procedure?**
  - Your child will be completely asleep. An anesthesiologist will meet with you before the procedure to discuss going to sleep before the surgery, waking up afterwards, and may discuss some options for helping with pain control after you wake up.



- **Will my child need to stay in the hospital after the procedure?**
  - Your child will likely need to stay in the hospital for a least one night, and maybe a few more. In order to go home, we will have to make sure that he or she can eat and drink without being too nauseous, be kept comfortable on medications taken by mouth, and be safe getting out of bed, etc with skills taught to by a physical therapist. Your treatment team should be able to give you an estimate of how long the hospital stay will be.

### Recovery

- **Will I need to use a wheelchair or crutches?**
  - If the procedure is on one of your legs, you will likely need to use crutches or a wheelchair for a period of time. The skin and other tissues need to heal for a period of time before a prosthesis can be used. While you are still getting used to your prosthesis, you may wish to use these devices as well when you need to cover longer distances.
- **Will I need physical therapy after the procedure?**
  - You will likely need some level of therapy after the procedure, but when this will start, how long it will last, and how intense it will be varies greatly between patients. In general, younger healthier patients need far less therapy than older patients.
- **I've heard that some people still can feel their legs, feet, etc. after an amputation. Is this normal?**
  - It is normal, and is called a phantom sensation. Not all patients experience this but most do for a period of time. If it is uncomfortable, please speak with you treatment team about options.

### Prosthesis

- **When will I get a prosthesis?**
  - Most patients will start getting fit for a prosthesis within 4-6 weeks after surgery. This process isn't started until the skin (and potentially bone) has healed enough, so if your surgery was larger or you are receiving any other treatment that delays healing, this process may not get started until later. Your treatment team will keep you informed of when to be fit for a prosthesis.



- **How does a prosthesis stay on?**
  - The fit of a prosthesis and the way the device stays attached to your leg is unique to your leg. There are many different ways to fit the prosthesis to your leg, and your prosthetist will go over these with you.
- **How difficult is it to get the prosthesis to fit correctly?**
  - Usually the prosthesis is able to be fit correctly with 1-2 visits to the doctor for x-rays, as well as a few visits to the prosthetist for construction of the device. If you have a more complex problem that led to the amputation this process can take longer.
  - In growing children, prostheses need to be evaluated at least once a year to ensure that the fit is maintained as they grow.
- **Are bionic prostheses available that can make me just like I was before?**
  - Many different types of prostheses are available and your doctor, prosthetist and therapist will work with you to choose that prosthesis that best suits your limb and your goals. No prosthesis is as good as a normal limb, but there are prostheses available that will let you do most if not all of the activities you wish to do.

### Life After Amputation

- **What physical activities are available for people with disabilities?**
  - Please refer to our website for a list of organizations that specialize in teaching people with a disability about activities they can get involved in and organizing events/outings that you can participate in.
- **Are there any social or support groups available?**
  - The groups mentioned above are great places to start if you're looking to meet other people with disabilities. There is also a separate list for primarily social and support groups.