



amputee  
coalition™



**Patient and Prosthetist: Working  
Together for a Successful Outcome**

## ● FIVE IMPORTANT THINGS TO HELP YOU CHOOSE A PROSTHETIST

- 1. Get information from someone with a similar type of limb loss or circumstances similar to yours.** The Amputee Coalition can provide you with a list of support groups in your area and also has a list of peer visitors who may be helpful.
- 2. Interview more than one prosthetist.** If you are facing an amputation, or even if you have worn a prosthesis for years and decide to choose a new prosthetist, plan to visit and interview several prosthetists before making your decision. Your physician or surgeon may make recommendations, but ultimately, the decision is yours. Your relationship with your prosthetist will be an ongoing association, so it is important to choose someone you trust and with whom you feel comfortable.
- 3. Find a prosthetist who has offices that are convenient to you.** Because a prosthesis is custommade and will require multiple visits to your prosthetist, it is important to choose someone who has an office that is convenient to your home or work.
- 4. Bring someone with you when you interview potential prosthetists.** It is helpful to bring a friend or family member on your visit to assist you with the interview. A support person can take notes for you during your conversation with the





prosthetist. Ask questions to determine if the prosthetist is a good match for you and your prosthetic needs. Choose a prosthetist who listens to you, is willing to spend the necessary time with you, and is responsive when you have an urgent need for repairs to your prosthesis.

- 5. Check credentials.** It's important to know the prosthetist's credentials, the level of education he or she has completed, and how much clinical knowledge and experience he or she has. Ask how much experience the prosthetist has treating individuals with an amputation similar to yours. Find out if the prosthetist is certified and if the facility where he or she works is accredited by one of the two accrediting organizations in the United States: the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics (ABC) and the Board of Certification/Accreditation (BOC). Some states require prosthetists to be licensed, so investigate that as well. Certification, licensure, and accreditation indicate a credible and competent practice, current and up-to-date credentials, and a commitment to patient care.

## Communicate Your Needs

A person who has recently lost a limb must work hard to reach his or her goals, and results are best when a group of professionals comes together to provide the tools to succeed. Once you have selected a prosthetist, you will need to work closely with that individual to ensure your needs are met. Your prosthetist should clearly communicate with you and your healthcare team—your physicians (e.g., primary care physician, physiatrist, and surgeon), nurses, and therapists (physical and occupational), just to name a few. When you first visit your prosthetist, it is important that you discuss your priorities and preferences. Do you want to be athletic? Are you most concerned about the cosmetic finish of the prosthesis or the function of the prosthesis? It's important to discuss all of your health issues with your prosthetist to determine the best possible options for your care.

## Understand Your Prosthesis

The design of your prosthesis will be based on considerations such as your overall health, anticipated activity level, relative strength and flexibility, vocational needs, hobbies, and interests.

Your prosthesis will consist of a socket, the portion of your prosthesis that is worn against your residual limb and is custom-made to ensure an appropriate fit, and additional prosthetic components. Component parts, such as prosthetic knees and feet, are selected from a variety of manufacturers to address your individual needs.



Both the socket and the attached components will require regular maintenance and periodic replacement to ensure optimal function. Thus, a good working relationship with your prosthetist is very important so you can achieve the best possible outcomes for your prosthetic use.

Doing your research before you select a prosthetist and communicating your expectations to him or her will help you establish a successful long-term partnership.

**Successful relationships with healthcare providers are crucial to ensure the best possible outcomes, especially for someone who has experienced limb loss. The relationship between patient and prosthetist is critically important—you will likely be working together over a long period of time.**

## Insurance Coverage

Insurance and coverage issues can be complicated, so be sure to ask questions about them during your visit with the prosthetist. Remember that your insurance policy may limit what type of devices the prosthetist can provide to you. Below are some questions to ask about insurance coverage and your prosthetic care:

- Does the facility accept your insurance?
- How much of the total cost of your prosthetic care will your insurance cover, and what portion will be your responsibility?
- Are there annual or lifetime dollar limits that affect the type of device that can be provided?
- Are any specific types of devices excluded?
- Will you have to pay for follow-up appointments?
- If the facility does accept your insurance, does your insurance require prior authorization?
- Will the facility handle insurance authorizations, or will it be your responsibility?
- Does the facility offer payment plans?



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## ABOUT THE AMPUTEE COALITION

The Amputee Coalition is a national donor-supported, nonprofit health organization serving the over 5.6 million people who have limb loss and limb difference in the United States.

For more information, please call 888-267-5669 or visit [Amputee-Coalition.org](http://Amputee-Coalition.org).

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was supported, in part, by grant number 90LLRC0002-01-00, from the Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Administration for Community Living policy.

It is not the intention of the Amputee Coalition to provide specific medical or legal advice but rather to provide consumers with information to better understand their health and

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