

Pregnancy, Childcare & Parenting

The Rehabilitation Journey After Upper Limb Amputation



This handout addresses concerns that may be commonly encountered by persons with upper limb amputation during pregnancy and early parenting. It is important to discuss your family life goals with your rehabilitation team to address your specific needs based on your personal circumstances.



Coping with Amputation

With upper limb amputation, the normal tasks of parenting and childcare may need to be adapted to your needs and situation. If you are already a parent at the time of limb loss, you may want help troubleshooting returning to previous family activities at home and in the community. You may want assistance with explaining your amputation to older children, and some children may need time and gentle introduction to the appearance of your amputation, new prostheses or equipment.

If you or your partner are pregnant or planning on pregnancy, you may have a more general sense of what your needs may be. In either case, family life is dynamic and the rehabilitation goals for you and your children can be expected to change over time. Make sure to talk with your health care team about your family life and your unique situation and needs. Bring up specific goals with your health care team and how best to manage new family-oriented tasks.

Pain Management

There are many medications that can be used to treat phantom limb pain or other amputation-related pain conditions. These medications may not be safe to take while trying to become pregnant, undergoing fertility treatment or procedures, while pregnant or while breastfeeding. Let your medical doctors know if you are planning on becoming pregnant or breastfeeding in order to review the safety of medications during these important times in your life.

Some medical devices that are commonly used for pain management after amputation (TENS units, E-stim, Ultrasound) in the rehabilitation setting may need to be stopped or used in a modified fashion during pregnancy. Talk with your medical team if you develop new back pain (upper or lower), new or changing numbness/tingling in your residual limb (s), hands or feet, or any other new pain symptoms.



Care of the Residual Limb

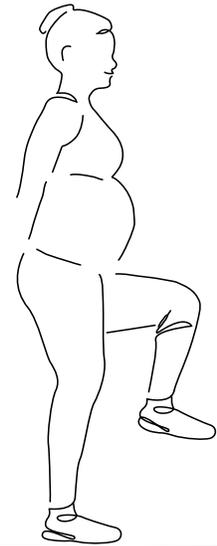
With the body changes that occur during pregnancy and after delivery, it is important to closely monitor the fit of your prosthesis and residual limb skin. Addressing prosthesis fit issues quickly will help to prevent the development of serious complications with your residual limb. You may want to plan frequent visits with your prosthetist during this time period.



Physical Rehabilitation

If you are in active physical rehabilitation before becoming pregnant or while pregnant, in most cases, you should be allowed to continue

participation. Talk with your OB/GYN physician or physiatrist (rehabilitation physician) for any restrictions you may need to follow. Examples may be monitoring blood pressure, medication use, or monitoring for symptoms of blood clots. There may be additional physical rehabilitation needs after giving birth, depending on many factors such as your pre-pregnancy level of fitness, level of physical activity during pregnancy and if you had your baby by c-section or required interventions during birth.



Functional Rehabilitation

For individuals with upper limb amputation, there may be new challenges after becoming a parent. You may notice that standard recommendations for daily parenting tasks will not work the same way for you whether or not you choose to use your prosthesis. If you choose to wear your prosthesis, you may need new terminal devices to perform parenting tasks like changing diapers, holding and feeding your child.

If you delivered your baby by c-section, you may have post operative lifting restrictions that limit prosthetic use or require you to use new equipment. Talk with your occupational therapist to assist with troubleshooting common tasks and equipment use such as cribs, changing tables, car seats in an adapted vehicle and/or strollers or high chairs. You may find that modifying this equipment helps you care for your baby more safely. If you have other injuries related to your amputation, you may need to be aware of other safety concerns such as impaired sensation for checking food/formula or milk temperatures or safely modifying holds.

The Prosthesis

Managing new child care tasks may require making changes to the type of prosthesis you wear or obtaining different componentry for your prosthesis. You may also benefit from the use of new or different adaptive equipment as your parenting and childcare demands evolve over time. Depending on the level of your amputation, you might find that some tasks are better accomplished without your prosthesis.

