FACTSHEET:

Coming to terms with an amputation - and organisations that can help

It can be really difficult to come to terms with losing a limb, particularly if you did so in traumatic circumstances.

People who’ve been through it often say it feels like losing a loved one. If you or someone care about has recently gone through an amputation, this factsheet is designed to help you adjust to the changes and get in touch with people who can help.

The physical and practical changes can be hard to adjust to

Setting aside the psychological impact of losing a limb, which can be devastating, it’s a significantly life-changing event on a practical level too. Amputees often experience some or all of the following physical changes:

• Mobility issues, leading to reduced independence
• Issues around the healing of your stump
• Strain injuries on remaining limbs, caused by over-reliance on them
• Phantom limb pain - between 50% and 80% of amputees report pain from their missing limb.

As a result, you’re likely to be spending more time taking care of your health and well-being and may need more help with everyday tasks.

And as well as physical changes, your injury will mean some practical changes need to be made. Your household income may go down if you’re unable to work - and if you can return to work, your workplace may need modifying. If you need a wheelchair, your home may need modifying to accommodate it, and you might need to think about a new approach to your hobbies and interests.
Anxiety and depression are not uncommon

Not surprisingly, many people find it difficult to accept and adjust to these physical and practical changes, and stress reactions are not uncommon:

- Increased irritability and anger
- Feelings of grief and/or prolonged sadness and hopelessness
- Inability to feel pleasure
- Suicidal thoughts
- Feeling anxious and/or worrying
- Finding it hard to relax and wind down
- Recurring flashbacks to the accident that caused your injury - people who suffered amputation as a result of a trauma injury are at increased risk from suffering from PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder)
- Changes in your levels of concentration, memory and sleep habit
- Increased reliance on substances, including alcohol, cigarettes and illegal and over-the-counter drugs
- Reduced self-esteem and changes in your body image

While these emotional responses are entirely normal, it’s important to talk to your doctor if you’re experiencing some or all of them - help is available, and there’s no need to suffer in silence.

The emotional journey to coming to terms with your injury

The emotional journey that many people who’ve lost a limb conventionally go on is very similar to the grieving process, and can be broken down in stages that you might recognise:

“This isn’t happening to me…”
The Denial stage of your injury. It’s not uncommon to wake up in the morning and forget your accident happened, meaning the trauma of losing a limb is replayed over and over again.

“Why me? What did I do to deserve this?”
During the Anger stage, you might lash out at people. The person who caused your injury, everyone who isn’t injured - including your loved ones - yourself for putting yourself in the situation that resulted in your injury.

“I’ll give anything - do anything - to be able to walk again.”
During the Bargaining stage, you acknowledge your injury but still don’t accept it, and many people try to bargain for a cure.

“What’s the point in carrying on?”
Life will never be the same again. Feelings of Sadness after a spinal cord injury are common.

“OK. It’s happened. We can do this.”
Once you start to have some Acceptance of your injury and new way of life, you can start to look forward and see that there is life after amputation - and one that can be just as full and fulfilling.

Your aim:
to focus on the good, not the bad

In the early days, you’ll inevitably focus on what you’ve lost. It’s entirely normal to feel angry, sad, cheated and frustrated. But as time goes on, try and concentrate on what you have left: your strength of character and spirit, and your remaining physical function. You can’t change what’s happened. You can’t undo your injury. But you can build on everything that remains, and live a meaningful, fulfilling and ultimately very happy life.
Useful contacts

You're not alone. There's a world of support out there, both for people who've lost limbs, and their family - here are some good places to start:

**MONEY & YOUR RIGHTS**

**Department for Work and Pensions**
- www.dwp.gov.uk
This section of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) website is updated regularly with information about changes that affect disabled people.

**Gov.uk**
- www.gov.uk
Comprehensive information for disabled people covering benefits, rights, education, health and support and more.

**MEDICAL**

**The British Pain Society**
- www.britishpainsociety.org
Information on all aspects of pain and its management.

**NHS Choices**
- www.nhs.uk
Information on conditions, treatments, local services and healthy living.

**COUNSELLING AND COMPLEMENTARY THERAPY**

**Therapy Directory**
- www.therapy-directory.org.uk
Find a qualified and registered complementary therapist in your area.

**Counselling Directory**
- www.counselling-directory.org.uk
Talking helps - find an appropriate counsellor in your area.

**REHABILITATION**

**Adventure Rehab**
- www.adventurer rehab.co.uk
Innovative, 1:1 and group training focusing on recovery of confidence, goal setting and both physical and psychological resilience.

**WORK**

**Shaw Trust**
- www.shaw-trust.org.uk
The largest UK provider of employment services for disabled people, Shaw Trust is a national charity that provides training and work opportunities for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market due to disability.

**Association of Disabled Professionals**
- www.adp.org.uk
Drawing on the expertise of disabled professionals to improve educational and employment opportunities for disabled people.

**EVERYDAY SUPPORT**

**The Limb Loss Information Centre.**
- www.limblossinformationcentre.com
An online resource providing guidance for individuals with congenital or acquired limb loss and their friends, family and carers through the emotional, physical and psychological process of coming to terms with limb loss.

**Limbless Association**
- www.limbless-association.org
A leading charity providing information and support to the limb-loss community, their families and healthcare professionals.

**Limbcare**
- www.limbcare.org
A relatively new charity that aims to make a positive impact around the world for all Amputees and the Limb Impaired.

**The Douglas Bader Foundation**
- www.douglasbaderfoundation.com
The Douglas Bader Foundation aims to advance and promote the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of people without one or more limbs.
**PROSTHETICS AND EQUIPMENT**

- **Limbless Association private prosthetic clinic list**
  > http://www.limbless-association.org/resource-directory/?c=2
  
  A list of private prosthetic clinics in the UK, with contact details.

- **Limbless Association NHS disabled services list**
  > www.limbless-association.org/resource-directory
  
  A list of all the NHS disabled service centres in the UK, with contact details.

- **Forum of Motability Centres**
  > www.mobility-centres.org.uk
  
  A network of 17 independent organisations offering information, advice and assessment for individuals who are recovering from an accident or injury that may affect their ability to drive or access a motor vehicle.

- **Disabled Living Foundation**
  > www.dlf.org.uk
  
  Advice and information to help you find the equipment needed to live independently.

- **Living made easy**
  > www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk
  
  Practical advice on daily living equipment.

- **DisabledGear.com**
  > www.disabledgear.com
  
  Buy and sell second-hand used disabled equipment.

**SUPPORT FOR CARERS**

- **Carers Direct**
  > www.nhs.uk/carersdirect
  
  Information, advice and support for carers.

- **Never Alone**
  > www.neveralone.org.uk
  
  An online support community for supporters and carers.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

- **The Accessible Planet**
  > www.theaccessibleplanet.com
  
  Up-to-date information on anything and everything accessible to wheelchair users.

- **Airport guide**
  > www.parkat.co.uk/disabled
  
  Helpful information for disabled people planning to travel by plane.

- **DisabledGo**
  > www.disabledgo.com
  
  Online access guides to a huge range of venues.

**HOLIDAYS**

- **Tourism for All**
  > www.tourismforall.org.uk
  
  A registered charity providing a variety of travel and holiday information for disabled people.

- **Bruce Wake Charitable Trust**
  > www.brucewaketrust.co.uk
  
  Accessible canal and river holidays.

**SPORTS & ACTIVITIES**

- **English Federation of Disability Sport**
  > www.efds.co.uk
  
  The national body responsible for developing sport for disabled people in England.

- **Inclusive Fitness Initiative**
  > www.efds.co.uk/inclusive_fitness
  

- **Disability Snowsport**
  > www.disabilitysnowsport.org.uk
  
  Disability Snowsport UK is a people-centred organisation that believes anyone should be able to take part in and enjoy the thrill of snowsports.

- **British Amputee Golf Association**
  > www.baga.org.uk
  
  Founded by keen golfer Brian Mayo, who lost both of his legs but not his love for the sport.

- **Rough Riderz**
  > www.roughriderz.co.uk
  
  Four-wheeled mountain biking club for adrenaline-junkie wheelchair users.

- **WheelPower**
  > www.wheelpower.org.uk
  
  Creating opportunities for people in wheelchairs to take part in competitive sport.

- **Wheelyboat Trust**
  > www.wheelyboats.org
  
  Find wheelchair-accessible Wheelyboats to use for angling, pleasure boating, nature watching, etc.

**If you need more help, get in touch**

Our specialist team of sympathetic serious injury lawyers can help you secure your financial future with any compensation you are entitled to.

**Call us now...**

0800 030 4021

or visit minsterlaw co.uk/serious-injuries