
Terms and definitions

As someone who is receiving a prosthesis, you are entering a new world. This world has its own language. Here is a word list to help you become familiar with what you will hear discussed and improve communication with your prosthetist.



Tip from Lee

“An amputation is a traumatic experience. Learning to live with a prosthetic limb can be both scary and thrilling simultaneously. Broken bones heal and so do the wounds of an amputation, but they each take time.”

Prosthetics

Alignment

The position of a prosthesis and its various parts in relation to the body.

Amputation

The act of surgically removing a limb.

Bulbous

Describes the large, round shape at the end of an amputated leg, which is common after surgery and will decrease in time.

A



Check socket

Prosthesis that is worn only in the clinic. It is clear and easily adjustable to determine the best fit. It then is used to make the prosthesis that is taken home (**Figure A**).

Contracture

Fixed shortening of muscles, tendons and other soft tissue structures in the body. Contractures are unwanted and hinder the rehabilitation process.

B



Definitive socket

This socket is strong, lightweight and can be made to match skin color or with a carbon fiber look or customized design. Once the limb size has stabilized, the definitive socket will be made (**Figure B**).

Distal

Denoting an area away from the center of the body or point of attachment.

Flexible inner liner

A soft material lining the inside of the prosthetic socket. It is made of a flexible and more forgiving material than the prosthetic socket.

Foot

The prosthetic foot typically is made of carbon fiber. Most do not have a joint but rather bend and flex, replicating the natural motion of the foot while walking (**Figure C**).

Footshell

Outer covering of the prosthetic foot. Can be worn with a sock and fits into a shoe (or sandal if a sandal toe option is available) (**Figure C**).

Gait

A person's manner of walking.

Limb volume

Refers to the size of the residual limb.

Limbguard

Plastic protective cover for the limb. It helps prevent damage to the leg and suture line during recovery after surgery (see page 14).

Liner

Gel material that is rolled directly onto the leg. It is a protective barrier between the leg and socket. It also helps keep the prosthesis attached to the leg. Liners come in different materials, and the prosthetist works with each individual to choose the best option for him or her (**Figure D**).



Our goal is to provide you with a prosthesis that improves your mobility, function, comfort and confidence.

Locking pin

A metal pin at the end of the liner that engages in a locking mechanism in the socket, thus keeping it attached to the leg (**Figure D previous page**).

Preparatory prosthesis

A preparatory prosthesis is the first leg the patient will wear: He or she takes this prosthesis home from the clinic and gradually increases the amount of time and walking done with it.



Tip from Lee

"A positive attitude has a large effect in your recovery. Make up your mind that whatever happened to you will not stop you."

Prosthesis

A replacement arm or leg.

Prosthetist

Healthcare provider who specializes in designing, fitting and adjusting artificial limbs.

Proximal

Denoting an area close to the center of the body or point of attachment.

Pylon

The shin-like portion of the prosthesis connecting the socket to the foot.

Range of motion

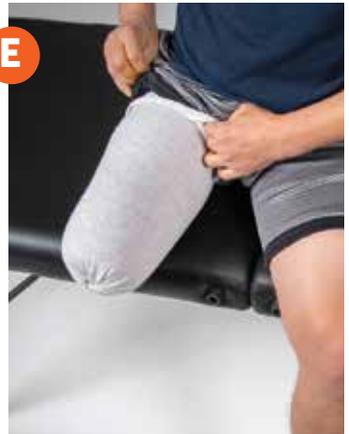
Measurement of movement a joint is capable of.

Residual limb

Portion of the limb remaining after amputation surgery.

Shrinker

A tight-fitting sock used to decrease the swelling of the limb after the staples/stitches are removed. It will begin to shape the leg and get it ready for a prosthesis (**Figure E**).



Socket

The part of the prosthesis that the limb goes into. The socket is custom made to match the shape and contours of the limb.

Socks

Applied over the prosthetic liner to allow the patient to adjust the fit of the prosthesis as the limb volume changes throughout the day (**Figure F**).



Staples/stitches

Hold the suture line together after the amputation.

Suction suspension

Method of suspending the prosthesis that uses an air-tight seal around the leg.

Supracondylar suspension

Method for suspending the prosthesis that uses a pad on top of the femoral condyles (boney area on the sides of the knee).

Suspension sleeve

Gel liner on the outside of the socket that rolls onto the leg, thus creating an airtight seal to keep the prosthesis attached to the leg.

Suspension

Method by which the prosthesis stays attached to the leg.

Vacuum suspension

Method for suspending the prosthesis on the limb that actively draws air out of the socket, thus keeping it attached to the leg.

Weight-bearing

The act of standing and supporting body weight with the legs.

Window

A hole cut in the prosthetic socket to allow for muscle motion or a boney area. Common in above-knee sockets or below-knee sockets with boney prominences (**Figure G**).



Levels of amputation

Ankle disarticulation (Syme's amputation)

Amputation through the ankle that maintains a heel pad and distal bulbous shape of the residual limb. Some weight bearing can be tolerated with this level of amputation, but a prosthesis still is required.

Below knee (transtibial)

The two bones of the lower leg are the tibia (the larger one) and the fibula. This level of amputation goes through both of these bones and is the most common level of amputation. Weight bearing is done via total contact along pressure tolerant areas and relief along bony prominences.

Knee disarticulation (through knee)

This level of amputation goes directly through the middle of the knee. Knee disarticulations require a knee joint in the prosthesis and allow the leg to bear weight.

Above knee (transfemoral)

The femur is the large bone in the thigh. A transfemoral amputation bisects the femur. Weight bearing is achieved via total contact and the ischium bone of the pelvis. This is the bone that weight rests on when a person is seated.

Hip disarticulation

This level of amputation completely removes the femur. It is uncommon but can occur because of tumors, severe trauma or an advanced infection.

Types of leg amputations

