

The ROYAL MARSDEN

NHS Foundation Trust

Amputation – what you can expect

Rehabilitation services

Patient Information



NHS

Introduction

This leaflet explains the amputation process and what you can expect during your hospital stay. It is important to remember that everyone is different and this leaflet can only be used as a guide. We hope it answers some of your questions but please do not hesitate to contact a member of the team if you have any other queries.

Amputation can be seen as ‘constructive’ rather than ‘destructive’ surgery. It may even be a new beginning in that your own limb was causing you pain and may have been a medical threat to your life.

The healthcare team at The Royal Marsden includes the following staff members:

- Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)
- Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP)
- Physiotherapist
- Occupational Therapist (OT)
- Medical team (doctors)
- Pain team (doctors and CNS’s).

There are also other members of the hospital team who can provide spiritual, psychological and emotional support, should you need it.

Family and friends

At such a stressful time it is very important that the people around you feel knowledgeable and confident. They will be involved in your care as much as you wish. It can be useful to have someone there with you when you are talking to a member of the team, as they can often prompt questions and remember what has been said afterwards.

Types of amputation

There are various types of amputation, and your surgeon will recommend the one that will be most beneficial to you, to help manage your condition. If you would like further information on your type of amputation, you can ask your CNS, Physiotherapist or OT.

Before surgery

The Physiotherapist and OT will meet you before your operation so they can explain their roles and the aims of rehabilitation, which will be tailored to meet your particular lifestyle and needs. The Physiotherapist and OT will address any questions that you or your family have. For example, you may wish to discuss financial concerns, work-related issues or worries about other practical issues, such as driving a car. If you have any particular concerns regarding going home after your operation, this is a good opportunity to discuss them and put a plan in place.

If you have unresolved pain, you may also meet a member of the Pain Team to maximise your pain relief medication before surgery.

In hospital

Rehabilitation

The Physiotherapist and OT will work with you to help you to adapt to change, and to increase your confidence and independence in carrying out everyday activities. Sometimes this involves new pieces of equipment or learning to do a task in a different way. They will likely provide you with an exercise programme to keep your remaining joints healthy and will also make sure you are safe for when you leave hospital.

Scar management

Once the wound has healed, you will be given advice on scar management.

Stump swelling

You may find that your stump is quite swollen for a while after your surgery, due to the healing process which is taking place at the operation site. The swelling will diminish over time due to natural processes and sometimes with the use of an elasticated compression sock.

Pain

Any pain issues, before or after surgery, will be reviewed by the specialist pain team.

Phantom pain

During the amputation, some of the nerves become 'disconnected' which may result in you feeling the amputated part of your body is still there. There may be strange sensations in the limb and it may feel like it is in an awkward position or you may even experience pain in the stump or amputated limb. This sensation or phantom pain should diminish over time and there are medications the doctors can prescribe to help.

Be careful in the first few months after your surgery. Some people report they occasionally forget their limb is no longer there and try to use it.

After you leave hospital

Services in your local area will be involved in your care once you leave hospital (including further rehabilitation in the community) if this is necessary. You may also need some extra help at home for a short period which can be requested from social services. The ward nurses can make this referral while you are in hospital.

Prosthetics

If you are thinking about having an artificial limb (prosthesis), your team at The Royal Marsden can refer you to your local limb fitting centre. This is normally done after your operation so that we have all of the information we need to make a referral; however, if you have specific questions about possible prostheses, limb centres are usually happy to meet you before your amputation. We can arrange this on your behalf if you wish.

Contacts details

If you have any questions or concerns please call:

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Clinical Nurse Specialist | 020 7811 8208 |
| Physiotherapist | 020 7808 2821 |
| Occupational Therapist | 020 7808 2830 |

Further information and support:

Douglas Bader Foundation

This charity provides information on new technology and services, and supports people with advice, one-to-one chats and signposting.

www.douglasbaderfoundation.com

Sarcoma UK

The bone and soft tissue cancer charity provides information on rehabilitation after amputation and offers support.

www.sarcoma.org/about-sarcoma/rehabilitation-hub/rehab-after-surgery/amputation-upper-or-lower-limbs

Alternatively, please call:

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899
(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Call us straight away if you are feeling unwell or are worried about the side effects of cancer treatments.

This service provides specialist advice and support to all Royal Marsden patients, as well as to their carers, and both hospital and community-based doctors and nurses caring for Royal Marsden patients.

Notes and questions

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References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

Telephone: Chelsea 020 7811 8438 / 020 7808 2083

Sutton 020 8661 3759 / 3951

Email: patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk

No conflicts of interest were declared in the production of this booklet.

Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

The patient information service is generously supported by The Royal Marsden Charity.

royalmarsden.org

Registered Charity No.1095197



Revised April 2023. Planned review April 2026
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Radiotherapy and
Chemotherapy Services
F538021 & F538022

