

The NSW Artificial Limb Service

The New South Wales Artificial Limb Service (NSW ALS) is one of the disability support programs administered by EnableNSW. It is responsible for the provision of artificial limbs to eligible people residing in New South Wales.

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How to avoid a fall after amputation

Why am I at risk of falling?

Amputees are at a higher risk of a fall and subsequent injury due to an altered sense of balance. As an amputee you are more at risk of not being able to regain your balance if you slip or trip.

What can I do to avoid a fall?

Minimise and if possible remove slippery surfaces in the home.

This can be achieved by:

- using carpet and slip resistant surfaces
- avoiding mats that can slide out from underneath you
- wiping up any spills promptly
- applying non-slip paint to tiles and laminate floors.

Wear appropriate footwear, such as comfortable shoes with non-slip soles. Avoid changing footwear that can alter the alignment of your prosthesis.

Avoid trip hazards by undertaking some simple steps:

- keep electrical cords fixed to skirting boards

- ensure carpet is well secured and in good condition
- arrange furniture so that the room is uncluttered and has clear walkways
- keep outdoor items, such as the garden hose, rolled or hung up and put away.

Improve lighting in the home.

Some suggestions include:

- sensor or night lights in hallways, bathrooms, walkways and entrances
- high watt globes in hallways and stairwells
- a bedside lamp.

If you are experiencing vision problems contact or visit your local doctor or your optometrist. Also, if you have diabetes, have your vision checked regularly. If you have prescription glasses make sure you wear them.

If you experience any issues with toileting such as increased urgency, rushing to the toilet, or frequent toileting, speak to your local doctor, a continence nurse or a physiotherapist.

Why is the fit of my prosthesis important?

Your residual limb (stump) is used to control the prosthetic limb during walking and standing, so your balance will only be as good as your control of the prosthesis. You should contact your prosthetist if the prosthesis fit is poor.

What if I have pain?

If you are experiencing pain in your residual limb when using your prosthesis your ability to control the prosthesis will be affected. This increases the chance of you having a fall.

It is important to consult your rehabilitation specialist or local doctor if you are experiencing problems with pain.

Will taking medication affect my use of the prosthesis?

Some medications can cause dizziness, drowsiness, fainting or an increase in toileting, which can make you more susceptible to a fall.

If you have any of these symptoms you should speak to your local doctor.

Do not stop or change any medication that has been prescribed for you without consulting your local doctor.

Will aids and equipment help?

There is a range of items that can help reduce the risk of falls.

These include:

- handrails in the bathroom, toilet and stairs
- shower chairs, bathseats and raised toilet seats
- cordless or mobile phones – these can be carried to prevent you from rushing to get the phone
- step edges painted with a contrasting colour
- a higher than average chair with arm rests – this can make standing up and sitting down easier.

An occupational therapist can provide advice on aids, equipment and home modifications to improve your safety.

What if I have a fall?

It is important that you know how to get back up off the floor if you do have a fall. A physiotherapist has probably shown you ways of getting up off the floor as part of your rehabilitation program.

If you have not been shown this, contact your local physiotherapy department to arrange an appointment. If you are having trouble with balance, a physiotherapist may be able to provide you with exercises that will improve your strength and balance.

If you have had a fall and notice any changes to your health, or to your residual limb or intact limb, then contact your local doctor.

It is important to care for your residual limb and intact limb to prevent further falls.

Where can I get more information?

Maintaining a good contact list of key providers is important. Record important local contact information below for future reference. You can also contact the Amputee Association of NSW on 1800 810 969.

Prosthetist: _____

Physiotherapist: _____

Rehabilitation Specialist: _____

Occupational Therapist: _____