

A silhouette of a person with a cane stands on a rocky outcrop, looking out over a sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow across the sky and the landscape. The person is wearing a backpack and holding a long cane.

One Step

AT A TIME

... An Amputee's Journey

**Frequently Asked Questions
Resources • Links • Contacts**

**to help you prepare and recover
from an amputation**



authored by

Doug Campbell

- Amputee, Mentor

DISCLAIMER

The following is the account of one man's journey through his amputation process. It is not a novel or book of stories, nor is it intended to be used as medical advice.

It is meant to serve as a resource to help new amputees with their recovery and journey by describing events and answering common questions.

The events that each individual will experience through their recovery as an amputee will vary from person to person, and may not be exactly as experienced and described by the author.

Throughout this booklet, monetary values and percentages have been quoted for the purpose of costs and funding. These values are circa February 2020 and could change in the future as determined by the Government in charge at the time.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My name is Doug Campbell. This is a brief summary of my story...

My eventual amputation started as a workplace accident where I received a compound break to my left leg that ultimately resulted in 21 surgeries.

On October 29th of 2013, I went to work just like every other day. This was to be a busy work week with lots of extra tasks needing to be done.

It was at 1:10 in the afternoon when I had a fall that resulted in a compound break to my left leg. I was rushed to the hospital where I received several pins and plates to repair it.

Unfortunately however, the process did not end there. Over the next three and a half years, and 18 accumulated months spent in the hospital, there were to be several surgical procedures, a few complications and revisions to my leg during the healing process. On Sept 8, 2016 it was decided for the better of my health that I was to receive a below-the-knee amputation.

Life was now very strange and I knew it would be different going forward. Nevertheless, I was on my way to a full recovery and I somehow knew that everything was going to be okay.

The journey for me that happened next was the inspiration and purpose for me to write this book. I wanted my experiences, challenges, successes and knowledge to be shared with new and future amputees in order to help in their journeys and healing process as well.

I never found myself alone during this time of being a new amputee as I surrounded myself with friends from a local support group. This led me to become involved with and active in sports, more particularly in golf, swimming and mountain biking which are amongst my favorite pass times. I was in my first golf tournament for amputees three months after leaving the rehab hospital. Yes, it is possible!!

I continued to rehab in the community to get stronger every day. I worked hard and eventually returned to work fulltime in a position where I was to be on my feet for most of the day. This went well for almost 2 years until I contracted a condition in my right foot - similar to what I experienced with the left leg - sending me back to the hospital.



After two more surgeries to address this, along with complications in the healing process, I once again, for the better of my health and quality of life, faced yet another amputation. On January 31, 2020, I received another below-the-knee amputation to my right side – thus making me a Bilateral Amputee. Although I was now already familiar with the entire process I was about to go through, the idea of being bilateral was a whole new concept that I needed to become familiar with. Once again, I attended support and connected with amputees, some of whom were bilateral as well. Sharing in a comfortable environment with similar conditions is priceless.

This entire experience led me down a path to help amputees all over the province by ensuring they too will be assured the same support and resources as I received in a timely manner. I now am happy to introduce my newly created foundation **MARAA, Mentors And Resources for Amputees of Alberta**, a non-profit organization to assist amputees throughout the province. MARAA is designed to provide support 24/7 and supply resource books and brochures either pre surgery or within 24–48 hours of the surgery.

As you may be about to find out, becoming an amputee is a much different life, however it is very manageable, and you now belong to a tight knit community of other amputees.

The MARAA Foundation will provide the necessary support and the resources required to help all amputees through their own experiences.

I sincerely hope going forward that this book and Foundation will help you in your journey to recovery.

Doug



The MARAA Foundation is highly motivated in its mission to provide mainstream and consistent resources, support and guidance to all amputees in Alberta.

By networking with other organizations, providing resources and awareness throughout Alberta, MARAA will be granting amputees the opportunity to stay active and resume a productive life.

INTRODUCTION

You have just become or are about to become an amputee.

Amputation will now become the new normal for your life. This is something to embrace as it will not change. A wide range of emotions are sure to follow, such as anxiety and depression. In amongst these emotions will be good days and successes that you have achieved. Be sure to embrace and share these experiences and feelings with those people close to you. All these emotions are quite common and are all part of the collective experience as an amputee.

It is also very important to know that you are not alone in this process. There are many contacts and resources at your disposal as well as support groups, peer visitors and other services that have trained professionals to help you with your recovery throughout the entire journey. Support groups and peer visitors and the contacts associated with each can be provided to you by your doctor or health care provider.

You will meet many people living with the same condition as yourself. Some will be lower extremity losses where toes, feet and legs may be removed. Others will have an upper extremity loss such as fingers, hands and arms.

As you meet and interact with others in a similar situation, you will soon discover every individual has their own story about how they became an amputee. Some may have had a medical condition that lead to the amputation. For others, the situation is much more dramatic as in a trauma of sorts like a vehicle or motorcycle accident. Once you have made contact with an amputee, most are willing to share their stories. So as long as you feel comfortable, don't be shy to ask and share those stories.

You will become an elite member of a community filled with "brothers and sisters" just like yourself. You will never be alone. Help is available for the asking and is always just around the corner.

It is recommended that family and loved ones also stay in touch with all aspects of the recovery and healing process, as it will no doubt affect them as well. Going to support groups, speaking with a mentor or your doctor is very helpful in understanding the next steps an amputee will endure.

This book will provide answers to commonly asked questions, provide information and links to websites and contacts that will start you on your way to understanding and being accustomed to the life of amputation.

Additional information may be obtained by research on-line, at your local library, or by asking your health care provider.

YOUR NEXT STEPS FORWARD

What happens now?

After your amputation, your surgeon will monitor your recovery and pain management until such a time that you may be discharged.

Rehab and recovery can happen as an inpatient, or if you are discharged home, as an outpatient. Your rehab doctor will help you decide what works best for your situation.

Next, EI (Early Intervention) is introduced. This is a process where you will be admitted to hospital for 10–14 days (approximate time may vary). It is during this time you will be assessed by a physiotherapist and an occupational therapist for such things as balance, weight, and range of motion, just to name a few. This is to ensure you are safe to go home when that time arrives and before you receive your prosthesis.

Once EI is completed, you will be discharged until such a time that your residual limb is completely healed. Before you are sent home, OT (Occupational Therapy) will discuss your living environment so that the appropriate equipment and aides will be in place for you when you arrive home. This will help you to become as independent as possible.

Once your residual limb has healed, you will be assessed by an amputee doctor. Upon their approval, you will be given a prescription for a prosthetic limb (prosthesis). Once the prescription is issued, you'll be given the option of being an *Inpatient* or *Outpatient* to the nearest facility specializing in prosthetic fittings within your community.

- ◆ **Inpatient...** If you are cleared to become an inpatient at the hospital, the wait could be much longer than that of outpatient. However once in there, the process to be fitted for a prosthesis will begin immediately.
- ◆ **Outpatient...** You may be given the opportunity to be an outpatient at the hospital for your fitting. The wait time for this is much shorter and you could possibly start within a couple of days of receiving your prescription. As an outpatient, you will be responsible for getting yourself to and from each physiotherapy and/or occupational therapy visit on your own.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

At the time of amputation, or perhaps at some point in your recovery, you may have several uncertainties and questions about your condition and recovery. This is especially true if your amputation was not planned and possibly a trauma.

I have compiled a list of possible frequently asked questions, in no particular order, that a person recovering from amputation may ask or at least be thinking about.

What is the recovery time of an amputation?

The recovery time of an amputation is dependent upon the type and location of the amputation, the patient's physical condition, and their body chemistry. The healing times may vary from patient to patient. The medical average may be 4-6 weeks for an average person under ideal conditions. Feel free to ask your Doctor as to how you're healing and how your recovery is progressing, as often as you wish.

How is pain management dealt with?

Some amputees may discover a range of pain and discomfort after their operation. This is entirely expected and will be dealt with immediately following your operation. Your doctor and health care providers will discuss in detail and outline a plan to manage your pain. The time and continuation of pain control will vary from person to person but will be closely monitored. Be sure to relay your pain level often so that changes may be ordered to your pain management program.

What is phantom pain/phantom sensation?

*After your amputation, you may feel two different sensations. One is **phantom pain** and the other is **phantom sensation**.*

- ♦ ***Phantom pain** are feelings or perhaps sensations you may experience immediately after your amputation. These feelings may include burning, stinging and twisting. For some people, phantom pain will resolve itself over time. With others it may last longer, in which pain medication may be required. If so, see your doctor and discuss a pain control regiment that works best for you.*
- ♦ ***Phantom sensation** is a feeling you get as if your limb still exists and is a part of you. You may experience similar feelings as you did before the amputation such as itching, warmth and the shape of your limb. This type of feeling is good as it will help you when the time comes to be fitted for a prosthesis.*

Will I be attending rehabilitation? Where will it be?

Rehabilitation is a vital part of recovering from any type of amputation. Part of rehab includes exercises, training and discussion to deal with the changes to your body since becoming an amputee. The time required in rehab immediately after your operation will vary from person to person depending on the type and/or location of the amputation, and the person's abilities. Additional rehab may be suggested or required after leaving the hospital. You will want to research and choose a physical therapy clinic within your community that suits you best. Rehab will be held at a facility, most often specializing in amputations and other orthopaedic injuries. This facility may be recommended by your doctor or surgeon and should be outfitted with all the necessary equipment, aids and resources necessary for you to safely manoeuvre as an amputee.

FAQ's (continued)

Are there amputee support groups I can attend?

Quite often, support groups may be held within the community for amputees, either at the hospital or a designated location. Family and loved ones are always encouraged to attend and go through the same process as much as possible so that they too may understand and learn what amputation is all about. Support groups will provide reading material such as pamphlets, booklets and inserts for you to keep. Open discussion often takes place and everyone has the opportunity to ask questions or tell their story. A big part of rehab after an amputation is accepting and embracing it, openly talking about it and asking any and all questions. Support groups are an excellent venue to express your feelings and tell your story amongst those in a very similar situation. Ask your doctor, surgeon or health care provider for the nearest location and times.

If you feel uncomfortable attending or talking in a support group, then you may want to contact a peer visitor for a one-on-one consult with another amputee in your area. Ask your healthcare provider for a list of such people registered as peer visitors.

Note: AASRA (Alberta Amputee Sports and Recreation Association) offers both group meetings and individual peer support for amputees all over Alberta. Group meetings are held in Calgary and Edmonton. Contact AASRA for times and dates in each city. For individual peer visits contact AASRA directly, at: aasra.ab.ca

Where can I be fitted for prosthesis?

Once your residual limb heals and you are absent of all sores and stitches, you will be assessed by your surgeon or doctor. Upon their approval you will receive a prescription for a prosthesis. In addition, a list of prosthetists within your community may be provided by the hospital. It will now be your responsibility to research and choose a prosthetist and proper facility where you will be outfitted with a prosthesis.

It is recommended that you research the names and contacts of your prosthetist within your community so that you can set up a meet and greet with them. Take notice of such things as greetings, cleanliness, staff personalities, ease of communication with your prosthetists and credentials of the business. Location may also be a determining factor in your decision. It is important you feel comfortable with your prosthetists and their team as they could possibly be assisting you with repairs and new fittings for quite some time.

How long does it take to be fitted for prosthesis?

Being fitted with a prosthesis can require a lengthy amount of time. However, it depends on the individual person and the location of their amputation. Under ideal circumstances, this procedure should take approximately 4-8 weeks. Expect several follow-ups to occur after your first fitting as the residual limb will change in size several times within the first year.

How much does a prosthesis cost? How will I pay for all this?

Prosthesis will range in prices from thousands of dollars to tens of thousands of dollars. However, in Alberta we have a program called AADL (Alberta Aids to Daily Living). This company, funded federally, provides Albertans with medical equipment and supplies. You are entitled to a new one every 2 years under such funding. The amount of funding you will receive is based on income. With a low income you may be considered "cost exempt" in which all expenses for medical equipment and supplies will be paid for. With a slightly higher income, you may be considered "cost share" in which most cases you will be covered 75%. The cost share portion of this program, if applicable to you, is based on this percentage to a maximum cost share of \$500 per year. The scheduled year for this program is July 1 to June 30. ▶ see Appendix: *Alberta Aids to Daily Living*

FAQ's (continued)

I have a child with an amputation - are the costs the same?

Does AADL cover these costs as well?

Can I get financial assistance from any other organizations?

Once again, prosthesis can cost thousands of dollars including repairs and maintenance, even for the children's limbs. AADL will cover a portion of the cost for the child's prosthesis, however The War Amps has a program that will also provide financial assistance. The CHAMP (Child Amputee) program will cover the cost remaining for standard or "everyday" artificial limbs that is not covered by any provincial assistance. Quite often hospital staff will contact the CHAMP program on behalf of the family.

In order to allow the children to participate in recreational sports, etc., a different type of artificial limb may be required. CHAMP recognizes the necessity for such limbs. These limbs will not be covered by the province. These special limbs will, however, be covered 100% by the CHAMP program. This also includes the adjustments, repair and replacement to the limbs as the child gets older and outgrows them.

Often families may be required to travel to outlying centres for appointments and fittings of their child's prosthesis. This may prove to be quite costly. Members of CHAMP can receive financial assistance for the costs to travel to and from prosthetic centres.

For forms and to become a member of CHAMP, contact The War Amps at the following: email: champ@waramps.ca or call toll free at 1.800.267.4023

Who looks after my prosthesis after I'm out of the hospital?

Generally, once you have left or are finished getting your initial prosthesis, you will be required to find a prosthetist within your community. It is recommended that you interview several places trying to find the perfect fit for you. Something important to consider is whomever you choose should have availability that will match your schedule as well. ▶ see Appendix: *Choosing a Prosthetist*

How long do prostheses' last? Will I ever need to replace it?

The lifetime of a prosthesis may vary from person to person and is dependent on its continued use, but generally each person becomes eligible every 2 years for a replacement. Certain other components such as sleeves and liners that need to be replaced more often may be supplied on a "limit per year" basis. This may vary for each province.

When you are first fitted with an initial socket, you will see several changes within the first 6-12 months due strictly to your residual limb decreasing in size as you wear it. At the end of this time period you will be fitted with a more permanent prosthesis. This prosthesis will be suitable and will allow for your specific activity level.

How long can I wear a prosthesis once I am fitted?

Once your prosthesis has been fitted, the times that it may be worn will vary from person to person. The average time may be 12 hours daily in ideal conditions. Longer times may be required in certain situations. If your residual limb gets tired or sore in the prosthesis, then you make take it off and give your residual limb a rest throughout the day. Regardless of how long you wear it for, it is important to always monitor the residual limb for skin breakdown, water blisters and darkened or discoloured skin. If any of these conditions occur you must NOT wear the prosthesis, and contact your prosthetist or health care provider immediately for further instructions.

FAQ's (continued)

I live alone - how will I manage until I am fitted?

Each individual case is unique and may be treated differently. In some cases you may stay in hospital until the time for fitting arrives if you are not able to go home safely. In other cases an individual may go home until fitting is expected, under the condition that the proper medical equipment and supplies have been provided and arranged in your home. Help from your occupational therapist prior to your release will ensure this has been set up for you. In addition there are companies that will provide help for those needing it such as DATS, Homecare, etc. Consult with your healthcare provider, prior to your release, about what assistance you may need or require.

How will I outfit my home to manage? Who pays for all this??

In some cases your home may require an outfit and modifications in order to better suite your needs and to return home safe. AADL will cost share most internal components of your home. Your occupational therapist will help to decipher which items will be covered. If you do have a cost share program with AADL, be sure to purchase as many of these items within the same billing year to a maximum deductible per year. The billing year is July 1 to June 30. For items such as a wheelchair ramp to your house, AADL does not cover this expense, however funds may be available from other programs. Be sure to enquire about such funding or grants before leaving the hospital.

Can I return to work after my recovery?

Many amputees can and will return to their former work depending on the type of amputation and their occupation. Certain aids may be necessary and only perhaps, a change in duties may be required in order for the amputee to return to work. This should be discussed thoroughly with your employer and the company prior to returning. The timeline for return to work is dependent on the success of your recovery time and rehab.

It's my right leg that was amputated - will I be able to drive again? What is the process for this?

Yes, it is possible to drive again with a right leg amputation. Modifications can be made at most car dealerships or their contacts and associates. These modifications include using a device that switches the accelerator to the left foot which now locates the break to the right of the accelerator.

A few steps are required before returning to the road:

- ◆ You must advise your motor vehicle registry of the change in your health status.
- ◆ Report your amputation to your insurance provider. Insurance costs will not increase due to this new status.
- ◆ One condition may be applied to your driver's license which only allows you to drive an automatic automobile.
- ◆ A drivers test may be required under some circumstances.

Practising in a driving simulator may be available to you during your rehabilitation.

▶ see Appendix: Drivers Licensing

FAQ's (continued)

I have an upper extremity amputation (single arm/hand or both arms or hands) - can I also return to driving?

Yes. It is possible to return to driving with either a single arm or hand (or both hands or arms) amputated. Not unlike driving with a lower limb amputation, some modifications will be needed to allow you to operate safely. Depending on your level of amputation and prosthesis, you may be permitted to only drive an automatic transmission. A road test may be required as well, depending on your Provincial regulations. Be sure to contact your local motor vehicle registry to report your change in health status.

Left hand or arm amputation: Some or all of the following devices or accessories may be required when operating a vehicle:

- ◆ a right hand steering knob
- ◆ a right hand signal extension

Right hand or arm amputation: Again some devices will be required in the operation of your vehicle:

- ◆ a left arm steering knob or ring
- ◆ a left arm gear shift extension

Bilateral upper amputation: This becomes a little more specialized in the devices required to operate a vehicle:

- ◆ your Occupational Therapist may suggest a floor mounted steering wheel for foot control steering
- ◆ another option is an electronic touchpad. The use of switches and keypads will allow the operator, in some cases, to operate the steering, gas and break all from a single touchpad

I'm a very active person - Will I be able to resume all the activities I'm accustomed to?

With the proper rehabilitation, time and recovery, most amputees can and will return to the activities they were accustomed to. However, in some cases, additional aids or alterations may be necessary to perform those same duties. Quite often amputees will discover other activities or hobbies that they could not do or were not interested in before the amputation.

▶ see Appendix: **Recreational Resources**

Can I swim with a prosthesis?

Yes. Specially designed prosthesis are available, (although not funded by any programs), and you can be fitted for them in order to swim. However, they are designed for this purpose only and are not intended to be worn on a daily basis.

There are also accessories to allow you to swim or shower with your 'regular' prosthesis. One such product is a plastic sleeve that covers and seals your prosthesis in order for you to swim or shower. Ask your doctor or prosthetist for more information.

APPENDICES

The following is a list of appendices, in no particular order, that will assist the new amputee in finding people and organizations willing to help in a wide range of topics. Physical, mental and psychological resources are available.

Websites and toll free numbers are offered as well to assist in researching additional information on the topics listed.

LIMB LOSS

Psychological Recovery

Emotions:

Amputation, or the loss of a limb, is a major event in anyone's life. You will have many questions running through your head at first. Wanting to know specifics on lifestyle changes that may include how all this will affect the relations in your life is a very common feeling to most amputees. Having to share and experience this whole situation with a loved one may be very exhausting and trying on the relationship. Emotions such as anxiety, depression and perhaps even loss and anger may be experienced. Having to face the idea of many uncertain challenges ahead may be a scary vision to you. This may cause you to protect yourself from these challenges by denying how you feel about the situation. Relying to close relations that all is okay with you when in fact it is not may be attempted.

Coping:

Responding to amputation will definitely affect each person differently and therefore reactions will vary. Regardless of the range of emotions being felt, it is important to understand that these feelings are normal reactions to the loss of any degree of limb. Rehabilitation is a pivotal part of your recovery. If you become overwhelmed with your emotions which therefore affects your rehabilitation, you may want to seek professional help. A psychologist or your rehabilitation team may be able to help you work through these issues.

Comparing:

Once becoming an amputee it will be easy to compare yourself to others. You must not let this interfere with your own rehab and recovery. Lower limb loss is much different from upper extremity limb loss. Experiencing an amputation at an early age is also much different than those experiencing it at a much older age. Some amputations are a result of certain medical conditions like diabetes, as opposed to those that are a trauma case. Understanding that each case and the experiences associated with it are unique to the individual is very important to the overall recovery.

For further information on this subject or others, begin by using the following resources:

- ◆ Amputee Coalition of Canada: amputeecoalitioncanada.org / 1.516.681.3484
- ◆ Amputee Coalition of America: amputee-coalition.org / 1.855.456.0267

Asking your health care provider may also help in obtaining information on all your questions.

STAGES OF AMPUTATION RECOVERY

Although the recovery for each amputee is individual to that amputee, it can also be helpful to see how thoughts, feelings and experiences have affected other amputees. Some individuals may choose to seek the help of a psychologist or other trained professional in order to learn more about themselves and the situation, so they may be better prepared in experiencing the months to come.

The recovery after an amputation may be broken down into several stages or phases based on feedback from previous amputees.

Stage 1: ENDURING

It is not uncommon for individuals shortly after amputation to focus on the present of dealing with post-amputation discomfort and pain. Avoidance of dealing with the loss and the distresses of the future may also be experienced at this time.

Stage 2: ANGUISH

Trying to understand why this has happened to you are valid feelings at this stage that may become the source of anguish. Intense feelings of loss, depression and even anger may all contribute to the overall pain that the amputee experiences.

Stage 3: ACCEPTING

There comes a time when the amputee may begin to accept the loss and what remains. How this loss will affect the future and how the roles in their life may change are all considered as they become aware of their new reality.

Stage 4: RECONCILING

Identifying with one's strengths and beginning to take control of their life once again is a pivotal part of the overall recovery. Certain individuals may accept their new normal by identifying with a new image for themselves.

Phase 5: SELF ADVOCATING

At this point in the recovery process, organizing the important items in one's life are said to be helpful to once again achieve balance. Developing and maintaining new routines are common in order to avoid dwelling on the loss.

Phase 6: PROSPERING

Most amputees at this level feel much more confident and may choose to be a role model to or mentor others as their trust level towards themselves has increased. Not everyone will achieve this level of recovery, nonetheless the position you are now in most often is a very positive one that can be built on.

Not all amputees reach every stage. However, remember that each recovery is very individual and personal. Some may spend more time on a particular phase and are unable to advance to the next phase as fast as others. This is very acceptable and no one should be rushed in this process.

For further information on this subject or others, begin by using the following resources:

- ♦ Amputee Coalition of Canada: amputeecoalitioncanada.org / 1.516.681.3484
- ♦ Amputee Coalition of America: amputee-coalition.org / 1.855.456.0267

Asking your health care provider may also help in obtaining information on all your questions.

ALBERTA AIDS TO DAILY LIVING

The *Alberta Aids to Daily Living* (AADL) program provides all Albertans with the necessary funding for medical equipment and supplies. In order to be eligible for this program, certain criteria may need to be met.

Eligibility:

- ◆ you must be an Alberta resident
- ◆ you must possess a valid Alberta Personal Health Card
- ◆ you must require assistance for longer than 6 months due to long-term illness or disability

Equipment Eligibility:

- ◆ in order to be funded for equipment a health care professional will assess you to determine all your medical needs
- ◆ all equipment must be ordered from an AADL approved vendor

Funding Assistance:

Funding for this program is based on a person's income. You will either become *Cost-Share* or *Cost-Share Exempt*, depending on your income. *Cost-Share Exempt* is for low income Albertans and *Cost-Share* is for Albertans with an income above a certain amount.

◆ *Cost-Share* :

- ◆ you are required to pay 25%* of the cost for each piece of equipment to a maximum of your total contribution of \$500* per benefit year
- ◆ the benefit year is from July 1 to June 30*
- ◆ payment is only made once for each piece of equipment

◆ *Cost-Share Exempt* :

- ◆ all basic equipment is covered 100%* and is designed for low income Albertans

** indicates 2019 references*

You may not be eligible for AADL benefits if you are eligible to receive funds from other benefits such as private insurance, WCB or comparable benefits from another source.

Please direct all questions to the health care provider assisting with your equipment.

For further information and answers on AADL, refer to the following:

Website: alberta.ca/alberta-aids-to-daily-living
Phone: 780.427.0731

CHOOSING A PROSTHETIST

Once you have gone through your assessment, rehabilitation, received an initial prosthesis, and left the hospital, it is now your obligation to choose a prosthetist that will serve you in the community. Typically there will be several to choose from, so doing some research is well worth the time.

Choosing a prosthetist is a very important part of your recovery as this person should serve you for many years to come. They will be involved in assessing you regularly, caring for your residual limb, and managing your prosthetic leg throughout the very sensitive first year of fittings.

It is important to look at and interview at least three or more locations to be sure you are getting exactly what you want. Remember the relationship you have between your prosthetist and his/her team is an important one, since it is directly associated to the care and well-being of your prosthesis.

Some very important considerations to make when choosing a prosthetist:

- ◆ Research several locations in your area to interview, and ask yourself these questions:
 - ◆ Are they properly licensed and in good standing?
 - ◆ Is the building and space clean and organized?
 - ◆ Are you greeted by friendly staff?
 - ◆ Were you given a tour and given sufficient time to ask your questions?
- ◆ Check for reviews from previous clients and consider these in your final decision.
- ◆ Are the prosthetists easy to understand and clear and concise with their answers?
- ◆ Is the location close to your residence?
- ◆ What are their business hours? Do they work on weekends and holidays?
- ◆ If you need critical service from them, are they readily available to you?
- ◆ What are their billing policies?

For further information on a physical therapy clinic in your area, use your preferred web browser to search the following: **(your town or city) prosthetists** i.e. – 'red deer prosthetists'

Asking your health care provider may also help in obtaining information on all your questions.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Post Amputation

Once you are back in the community after receiving your prosthesis, or perhaps even before you receive one, physical therapy may be required to further your rehabilitation.

There are several clinics in your area that will include the following service upon arrival:

- ◆ Assessment: This may include treatment at the clinic, education on managing your injury, and/or an appropriate exercise program.

When seeking physical therapy, most people need to be aware of the type of funding there is available. If you are seeking funded treatments first, the following must take place:

- ◆ A physical therapist will assess:
 - ◆ how your daily activities is affected by the injury
 - ◆ the benefits to you by receiving the treatments

Once the funded treatments have been accepted, be sure to inquire as to exactly what it covers and how many sessions are included.

If additional sessions are required after your allotted ones, then your therapist may look to the following for further coverage:

- ◆ extended health benefits
- ◆ WCB (if work related)
- ◆ vehicle insurance (if auto accident related)

If after an assessment you do not qualify for funded treatments, you may have other options such as:

- ◆ private insurance, etc.
- ◆ seek out a second opinion at an alternate location

For further information on a physical therapy clinic in your area, use your preferred web browser to search the following: **(your town or city) physical therapy clinics**
i.e. - 'red deer physical therapy clinics'



RECREATION RESOURCES

Throughout Alberta there are several recreational resources available to both amputees and the disabled community. The following list of website links to particular associations is a convenient way to become familiar with your favourite activity as an amputee.

Alberta Amputee Sports and Recreation Association aasra.ab.ca

Email: info@aasra.ab.ca

AASRA has been serving amputees and the disabled alike for several decades. They offer many links to sport organizations such as the Canadian Amputee Golf Association and Team Canada Disabled Volleyball, just to name a few.

Paralympic Sports Association parasports.net

Email: info@parasports.net

The Paralympic Sports Association offers many links to information about adapted golf, swimming, wheelchair hockey, sledge hockey, wheelchair lacrosse, etc.

Wheelchair Sports Alberta abwheelchairsport.ca

Wheelchair Sports offers information and links to such sports as wheelchair basketball, sledge hockey, hand-cycling, racing (athletics), tennis and rugby.

Primary Care Network albertapci.ca amputeecoalitioncanada.org

Rocky Mountain Adaptive Sports Centre rmasc.ca/our-programs/summer/

Many summer programs for children and adults are offered in Banff. Visit the website for more information regarding canoeing, mountain biking, golf, hiking, horseback riding, kayaking, etc.

For further information on disabled or amputee sports in your area, use your preferred web browser to search the following: **(your town or city) disabled sports**
i.e. – 'red deer disabled sports'

Contact AASRA at the above link for any sports or activities that is not mentioned or listed.

RETURN TO DRIVING

Guidelines

In Alberta, it is a licensed drivers responsibility to advise Alberta Transportation of any health changes you experience that could affect a person's ability to safely operate a vehicle. An amputation to any degree is considered such a change and should be reported. You are legally not able to drive until you have completed the following:

Call to report your change in health status:

- ♦ Alberta Transportation Driver Fitness and Monitoring

alberta.ca/driver-fitness-and-monitoring

Edmonton Phone: 780.427.8230

You may also report to an Alberta Registry Agent. For an Alberta Registry clinic in your area, use your preferred web browser to search the following:

*(your town or city) alberta registry locations
i.e. - 'red deer alberta registry locations'*

Have your family physician complete a *Medical Examination for Motor Vehicles Operators* form.

- ♦ Your doctor may request a road test, which will need to be completed prior to your returning to driving.

Complete a road test:

- ♦ If required by your doctor, road tests can be booked at any registry office that offers road examinations. If you have to install either a left foot accelerator pedal or hand controls in your vehicle, this has to be completed prior to your road test.

For a detailed copy of the guidelines for returning to driving, contact The War Amps for their detailed courtesy booklet *Drivers Licensing*.

Email: info@waramps.ca

Phone Toll Free: 1.877.622.2472



THE WAR AMPS

The War Amps is a well-established, non-profit organization providing information to amputees and their families about all levels and degrees of amputation. They provide support services, counselling and resources.

One division of The War Amps is the National Amputee Centre, or NAC. The information provided by NAC has been gathered from professional sources all over the world and is shared with Canadian amputees.

The website for the NAC section of The War Amps has many very useful articles to help all amputees and the professionals responsible for their care.



NAC provides booklets on different topics available to all amputees at no cost. Some of these booklets include:

- ◆ *Daily Living Aids*
- ◆ *Driver Licensing*
- ◆ *Pain and Phantom Limbs*
- ◆ *Entering the Workforce*
- ◆ *Applying for the Disability Tax Credit*
- ◆ *Life As an Amputee*

Support services are available through the *Adult Amputee Program*. For more information about the NAC, to request detailed courtesy booklets and resources, or to sign up with The War Amps, use the following contacts:

Email: info@waramps.ca

Phone Toll Free: **1.877.622.2472**

To enroll in the Child amputee program CHAMP, contact either of the following:

Email: champ@waramps.ca

Phone Toll Free: **1.800.267.4023**

AMPUTEE WEBSITES

A wide range of websites from sports to amputee news is designed to assist amputees of all degrees. Locate the one(s) best suited to your needs and interests.

MARAA, Mentors And Resources for Amputees of Alberta maraa.ca

Alberta Amputee Sports and Recreation Association aasra.ab.ca

Canadian Association for Disabled Skiing disabledskiing.ca

Canadian Amputee Hockey Association canadianamputeehockey.ca

National Sports Center for the Disabled nscd.org

Humour to Keep You Healthy humorproject.com

Adaptive Equipment to Help You Stay Active beabletodo.com

Community Recreation Programs edmonton.ca/programs-services.aspx

Learn Basic Computer Skills Online for Free gcflearnfree.org

Adaptive Recreation Equipment accesstr.com

Amputee News amputeenews.com

Amputee Resources/Education/Peer Support/Outreach amputeecoalitioncanada.org

Canadian Amputee Resources/Links amputee.ca

Active Living Canada center4activeliving.ca

Sports and Recreation Programs for Everyone justtryit.ca

DISABILITY TAX CREDIT

For Adult Amputees

The Disability Tax Credit (DTC) is a non-refundable tax credit that assists people with disabilities (amputation) to reduce the amount of tax they may have to pay each year.

To better understand the eligibility of the DTC as it pertains to amputees, the definition of an amputee is helpful. An amputee is described as:

- ♦ A person that underwent amputation; or the removal by surgery of a limb or other body part because of injury or illness.

It must be determined by a medical professional that having an amputation qualifies you as being disabled before you may be eligible to apply for the DTC.

In order to be eligible for the DTC, the individual must have a prolonged or permanent impairment. This impairment must restrict the individual from daily activities such as bathing, dressing, walking and other aspects or their overall care.

The eligibility of the DTC is not based on one's disability alone but rather the severity of the impairment and how it affects their everyday life.

It is only once an individual is eligible for the credit that they may claim a disability amount on their yearly taxes.

For further information on this subject, begin by using the following resources:

- ♦ Disability Tax Credit for Amputees: disabilitycreditcanada.com/contactus
- ♦ Canada Revenue Agency: canada.ca/revenue-agency
- ♦ Toll Free (personal inquiries): **1.800.959.8281**

Contact The War Amps for a detailed courtesy booklet *Applying for the Disability Tax Credit*.

Email: info@waramps.ca

Phone Toll Free: **1.877.622.2472**

For further savings, inquire about your eligibility for the following:

- ♦ Canadian Disability Savings Bond
- ♦ Canadian Disability Savings Grant Revenue Agency
- ♦ Canada Revenue Agency: canada.ca/revenue-agency

ADAPTIVE TRAVEL

At some point in your recovery or perhaps later on, once you have a prosthesis you may have the need or desire to travel abroad. This most likely will require some change from what you were accustomed to. Regardless of your choice of travel you may find yourself travelling with extra baggage, possibly including crutches, cane, wheelchair, walker, or perhaps extra prostheses.

Here are a few points to consider, regardless of how you decide to travel:

- ◆ Allow yourself extra time to get to your carrier because of your condition and extra baggage.
- ◆ At airline security, quite often they will fast track you through the handicap line.
- ◆ If you require special seating on your carrier, this should be arranged at the time of booking.
- ◆ Do not hesitate to ask to be seated early so that you may get settled once on board. There should always be a representative available to help you and your party.

The following links will provide more information on many types of adaptive travel:

- ◆ otc-cta.gc.ca/eng/take-charge

This is a 54+ page document compiled by the Canadian Transportation Agency called *Take Charge of your Travel*.

- ◆ amputee-coalition.org/advocacy-awareness/travel-questions-concerns/

This is a list of questions and concerns that will be answered for you from the Amputee Coalition.

- ◆ amputee-coalition.org/

Once again, this site can offer even more info about adaptive travel by entering the word "travel" in their search bar.

Please note: the links above are from the Amputee Coalition of America and not the Amputee Coalition of Canada.

ADAPTED AIR TRAVEL

What to Consider

- 1** Know your medical and personal needs. No two person's needs are the same. You are responsible for knowing your care requirements.
 - ◆ Do you have all your medications labelled in their original containers?
 - ◆ Do you have a doctor's note for your medical status?
 - ◆ Do you have everything you need to mobilize with you on the plane, and preferably in your carry-on luggage?
 - ◆ Do you have all of your equipment labelled with your name and contact information?
- 2** Don't assume that airline personnel know your individual care needs. Please give them specific instructions such as how to transfer you.
- 3** Make arrangements in advance for your needs at your destination.
 - ◆ Did you inform the airline that you will need an accessible seat?
 - ◆ Did you arrange transportation that is suitable for your needs to and from the airport?
 - ◆ Is your accommodation accessible? Can your wheelchair fit through the door of the hotel room or hotel bathroom?
 - ◆ Did you check the information on the foreign and Commonwealth office site?
 - ◆ Did you get your prosthetist to check your prosthetic limb prior to your vacation?
 - ◆ Did you get a list of contacts from your prosthetist of those prosthetists that work in the area you are travelling?
- 4** Always ask for assistance; airline and airport staffs are willing to assist if necessary. You will be transferred on to a small chair just before getting onto the plane so you will fit down the aisle; your chair will go in the cargo of the plane.
 - ◆ Have you labelled every part of your chair with your name and contact information?
 - ◆ Have you taken your wheelchair cushion with you on the plane?
- 5** Take personal care items with you on the plane in your carry-on luggage.
 - ◆ Have you packed all items you need to don your prosthesis?
 - ◆ Have you packed the cosmetics you use to maintain good skin health? Are they in original bottles and less than 100mL?

For more information on Adapted Air Travel, contact your local service provider.

ADAPTED TRAVEL - BUS & RAIL



- ♦ All reservations are to be made 24 hours prior to departure
- ♦ Cancellations must be made at least 24 hours prior for those who require our accessible services
- ♦ All persons who require our accessible services travel at a reduced rate
- ♦ Attendant travels free of charge (one attendant allowed)
- ♦ Red Arrow is not responsible for transportation to and from boarding locations

Attendant: Extraordinary Service means any service not normally provided solely by the coach operator and would include assisting in any physical lift of the person where no boarding device is available (including emergency evacuations). This also includes assisting with the person at their seat getting to and from in a station stop or in the on-board washroom, as well as assisting the driver with all sophisticated and/or power-assisted mobility aids.

Mobility Aids: Any mobility aid in excess of 150 lbs. must travel on-board the coach in the designated wheelchair position. Red Arrow is not responsible for disabled devices that do not conform to size/weight limitations of the motor coach.

Red Arrow **1.800.232.1958**



- ♦ Priority boarding and additional assistance is available at departure stations. Please mention your needs when you book your ticket. Arrive at the station early and let staff know what help you have requested.
- ♦ All VIA Rail trains are accessible to travelers in wheelchairs and are equipped with wheelchair tie-downs, grab bars in washrooms, and narrow wheelchairs for boarding, detraining, and access to the washrooms.
- ♦ Availability of said services varies according to the train equipment in use. To find out which cars are accessible to travelers using wheelchairs, please call VIA Rail.
- ♦ On VIA Rail transcontinental trains, travelers who are unable to come to the dining car or snack counters may have their meals served at their seat by VIA Rail personnel.
- ♦ Once on board the seat or cabin, passengers cannot circulate throughout the trains with mobility aids due to narrow corridors unless accessing the washrooms.
- ♦ Please call to ensure that your wheelchair or scooter is able to fit safely through the doors of the train equipment and that you are within the maximum weight restrictions for platforms (600 lbs.) and inclined stair lifts (varies from 450 lbs. – 495 lbs.).

VIA Rail Canada **1.88.842.7245**

SUMMARY

Although being an amputee to any degree can and will be a life changing ordeal for anyone, the prospects for a long and healthy life accommodating this change are endless. Almost all amputees return to a very normal and resourceful life after such an incident. Many will learn more about themselves that they may not have been aware of before. Perhaps certain activities, hobbies, or sports will begin a new chapter in your life as a result of your amputation. Many doors to many more opportunities, regardless of your interests and ability, will present themselves.

Becoming and dealing with an amputation is nothing to be ashamed of – rather it should be embraced as this is now your 'new life'. You are now part of an elite community that prides itself on being strong and able to withstand anything brought before them.

It is important to remember that regardless of how you feel about your condition, there is an entire community with peer visitors, support groups, local resources and information that will guide you through any situation you may encounter.

Please feel free to reach out to your doctor or health care provider for any additional information or consultation you may require. The following links and contacts will be a good start to your research:

MARAA maraa.ca Phone: [780.918.7832](tel:780.918.7832) Email: maraa@telus.net

The War Amps waramps.ca Phone: [1.877.622.2472](tel:1.877.622.2472) Email: info@waramps.ca

Amputee Coalition of Canada amputeecoalitioncanada.org Phone: [1.516.681.3484](tel:1.516.681.3484)

REMEMBER...

"On particularly rough days when I'm sure I can't possibly endure, I like to remind myself that my track record for getting through rough days so far is 100%... and that's pretty good." – Author unknown



The MARAA Foundation is highly motivated in its mission to provide mainstream and consistent resources, support and guidance to all amputees in Alberta.

By networking with other organizations, providing resources and awareness throughout Alberta, MARAA will be granting amputees the opportunity to stay active and resume a productive life.

www.maraa.ca



AASRA
Alberta Amputee
Sports & Recreation
Association

www.aasra.ab.ca