



## Keeping Fit

**M**aintaining a healthy body weight and exercising regularly are important lifestyle choices and should be incorporated into your daily routine. Eating right, playing a sport or going for a walk are all healthy habits that will benefit you for a lifetime. Keeping fit is especially important for amputees, who will see and feel the effects of a healthy diet and good fitness level in their daily lives.

### Why Should I Keep Fit?

- Maintaining a stable weight is important to ensure your artificial limb fits correctly.
- Amputees expend more energy in daily activities, so it's important to be in good shape to increase your endurance.
- Strong muscle strength is needed to use an artificial limb.
- Keeping your residual and sound limbs in tip-top shape is very important to minimize the possible long-term effects of being an amputee (i.e., repetitive stress injuries, reduction in bone mass, arthritis).
- Exercise improves overall muscle strength and balance. For leg amputees, it can improve gait and reduce back pain; for arm amputees, it can keep their sound hand, elbow and shoulder flexible and strong.
- Weight-bearing exercise (i.e., resistance applied to the muscle and bone) can increase bone mineral density, which can reduce the risk of osteoporosis later in life. Activities like swimming provide minimal resistance while activities like weightlifting provide high resistance to the muscles and bone and increase bone mineral density. Exercise not only helps maintain body weight, but reduces stress and anxiety.

- Adopting a healthy lifestyle lessens the risk of developing cardiovascular disease and diabetes later in life.
- Exercise leads to better sleep, greater self-confidence, and, best of all, mood elevation. In addition to relieving pain, endorphins released by exercise make you feel good!

### How Do I Know if I Am at a Healthy Weight?

- Check with your doctor to make sure you are within the recommended weight range for your age and height.
- We all have different body types; maintaining a healthy body weight does not necessarily mean being thin.
- The usual height-to-weight ratio may not apply, as an artificial limb usually weighs less than a human one. A few pounds may need to be added to the scale to get the right figure.
- If it is recommended you lose weight, ask your doctor or dietician to provide you with a weight loss program.



## How Do I Keep Fit and Stay Healthy?

- Eat regularly and do not miss meals. Breakfast is especially important as it increases your body's metabolism, which slows down overnight.
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Exercise at least three times a week for a minimum of half an hour each workout (work your way up to this level if you haven't exercised recently).
- Low-intensity workouts can be as beneficial as high-intensity workouts. Walking briskly, for example, is a simple and effective form of exercise.

## Workout Techniques – Adjustments and Devices

- Professional trainers can help you develop a unique exercise program to suit your amputation.
- You may be able to try a new position on a sports team (e.g., an above knee amputee may find it easier to play goalie on a hockey or soccer team).
- A suspension sleeve or brace can be worn to provide more secure suspension for high-energy activities like skating, skiing and running.
- Arm amputees can use specialty devices for weightlifting, hockey, golf, ball sports, and many other activities. Leg amputees may have special components (i.e., high activity knee units or feet and rotators which help with sports like golf) or even special recreational legs for activities like skiing and swimming. Your prosthetist may be able to suggest commercially available devices or make a custom device for you.

It's always a good idea – especially if you are a beginner – to consult with your doctor and your prosthetist to make sure your prosthesis is suitable for the activity you would like to try. Your workout should also include exercises that strengthen all muscles in your residual limb evenly so you do not create an imbalance, which may affect how you use your artificial limb.

There are many different ways to keep fit; the important thing is finding a healthy routine that works for you!

