

Adapting to Limb Loss

The Queensland Amputee Limb Service wishes to express its' appreciation to the Amputee Coalition of America for granting QALS access to information for the benefit of Queensland amputees and their families.

Information was sourced from :

The Amputee Coalition of America -
www.amputee-coalition.org.

Bodenheimer C, Kerrigan AJ, Garber SL,
Monga, TN. Sexuality in persons with lower
extremity amputations. *Disability and Rehabilitation*
2000; **22**: 409-415

*Patient Assist Leaflet compiled and printed by
Queensland Amputee Limb Service
Nov 2008.*



**Body Image, Relationships
and Sexuality
after Amputation**

Amputations affect our lives in many ways— our body image, relationships and even sexuality.

BODY IMAGE

We all think about how we look. Starting as children and throughout life, we have thoughts and feelings about body image— our shape, size and other physical attributes (such as hair, teeth and skin).

Our body image can suffer even more after an amputation. As amputees, we not only have to deal with changes in how our body works and feels but also in how it looks. The more we focus on what is missing—not just the limb but also the things we could do before—the more likely we will become depressed and angry.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Know you are still the same person inside. It may help to think of yourself as a whole person who happens to have a missing body part. Focus on learning new ways to do things you enjoyed before. You may need to be extra clever or creative.

Focus on the future rather than what is gone.

If you are learning to use a prosthesis, your body image is likely to change once you feel more comfortable with it. You will know this is starting to happen when you feel naked without it.

RELATIONSHIPS

Stay involved with people you already know and share feelings for. Join an amputee support group where you meet other amputees who live full and happy lives.

Talk with important people in your life about your feelings as an amputee. This includes feelings of anger, fear and frustration. It also includes how the other person feels now that you are an amputee. Your relationship is likely to be stronger after open and honest conversations like these.

SEXUALITY

We are all sexual beings. This term refers to all the ways we express loving feelings and emotions. Our whole body responds to sexual attraction. Sexuality includes feelings of arousal (expressed by touching, kissing and caressing) as well as sex (sexual intercourse).

It is important that you talk together about how your changed body looks, feels and works. Talking about this now can help prevent misunderstanding or hurt feelings later on.

Some things you can do:

- Focus on your pleasure and your partners. Do not keep thinking about how you want to perform.
- Give yourself permission to try new ways to be sexual. After amputation, you may want to find new positions that are more comfortable. For instance you could add some pillows if you have problems with balance.
- Explore and enjoy finding out ways that work best for you and your partner. Amputees all over the world have returned to loving, sexual relationships after their amputation. You can too. This will help with your body image, relationships and sexuality.

LIBIDO

Amputation itself will not directly affect your sexual function except in rare cases.

However, in a study, many people with a limb amputation have reported reduced libido. Side effects of medication was the most common reason given by study participations for their decrease in sexual function.

Continuing medical conditions such as diabetes mellitus and vascular problems can affect your sexual function, so speak to your doctor for advice and assistance.