

# AMPLITUDE

POWERFUL, PRACTICAL, AND POSITIVE LIVING WITH LIMB LOSS.

MARCH/APRIL 2015

REPRINT

Copyright 2015 Amplitude Media Group/Amplitude. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

www.amplitude-media.com

## Four Tips for Getting the Most Out of Your Prosthesis

WORDS JOHN PETER SEAMAN, CP, CTP

### O&P SOLUTIONS


 LIVING  
with  
AMPLITUDE

**Over the years**, I've worked with a wide range of amputees, in terms of their ages and physical conditions. During this time, I've learned some important things about how amputees can get the most benefit from their prostheses. In general, an amputee benefits from adhering to the following advice about his or her prosthetic arm or leg: Accept it, wear it, use it, and own it.

#### 1 ACCEPT IT

Some amputees have difficulty coming to terms with being an amputee. Becoming a successful prosthetic user is often as much a psychological challenge as it is a physical one. The sooner you accept that you are an amputee and might need to use a prosthesis to live more fully the better. Unless you overcome the negative psychological impact of becoming an amputee, you may be erecting a barrier that can hold you back from maximizing the benefits of using your prosthesis. It's best to focus on the future, not the past. Concentrate on what you are able to do, not on what you can't do, and strive to get

better at using your prosthesis—one step at a time.

#### 2 WEAR IT

You can, of course, find numerous reasons and excuses for not wearing your prosthesis. Ideally, however, if you are physically able, you should adopt a habit of putting your prosthesis on each day when you get dressed and then taking it off at the end of the day. It's pretty simple. If you don't wear your prosthesis, it will not help you return to a full life, which is probably the reason you chose to have one in the first place. So, unless your prosthesis does not fit your residual limb or hurts when you wear it, I would encourage you to push aside other reasons for avoiding wearing it.

#### 3 USE IT

Even if you wear your prosthesis regularly, that doesn't necessarily mean that you are using it. If not, you need to commit to doing so. Although sitting in a wheelchair with your prosthetic leg on might provide some psychological benefit, it will not yield any

significant physical benefits except for helping with transfers. You should consider your prosthesis a tool to help you achieve your activities of daily living (ADLs). Using your prosthesis not only can help you get from place to place or get things done, it can also provide a range of physiological and psychological benefits. Being active—including standing and walking with your prosthetic leg, or picking up, reaching for, and carrying things with your prosthetic arm—can help strengthen your muscles, prevent contractures, keep you from losing your range of motion, and promote blood and fluid circulation in your arms and legs, which are all good for your health.

#### 4 OWN IT

By this I mean take ownership of your prosthesis by doing the following:

- Adopt a daily hygiene ritual that includes inspecting and cleaning your residual limb and cleaning the inside of your liner.
- Use prosthetic socks as needed to maintain a good socket fit when you are adapting to fluctuations in the volume of your residual limb.

- Consult with your primary care provider periodically about your prosthetic needs.
- Contact your prosthetist promptly whenever you have concerns about your prosthesis, such as poor socket fit, worn-out liners, poor prosthetic alignment, or the need for repairs.

Don't be a passive prosthetic user and expect that you can just put your prosthesis on and go, without doing your part to keep it functioning properly. Think of your prosthesis like you would a car. You must keep it clean and have it serviced or repaired periodically so that it performs in a comfortable, safe, and efficient manner.

If you abide by these tips, you will be on your way to getting the most out of your prosthesis, which is a major step toward ensuring that you can also get the most out of your life.

*Please send comments or questions to the author at [jpseaman@aol.com](mailto:jpseaman@aol.com).*

*This article is for informational and educational purposes only and is not meant to be a substitute for personal medical advice. For specific advice about your treatment, consult your physician or other qualified healthcare provider.*