
After surgery

Limb care

- Always follow the advice your doctor/nurse/therapist/prosthetist gives you.
- For the first two weeks, keep the suture line covered with dry gauze or an ABD pad.
- Wash your limb with mild soap and water every day; pat it dry.
- Do NOT soak your leg.
- Keep the suture line clean and dry.
- Do not use any ointments on the suture line.
- Check your limb every day for irritation, skin breakdown and redness.
- Notify your doctor about any problems that arise.
- All those who come in contact with your limb should wear gloves or wash their hands before examining your leg.
- Be careful while moving in bed or getting in and out of bed.
- If you have diabetes, be sure to eat a good diet while continuing to maintain and monitor your sugar levels.
- Inform a healthcare provider about any pain or dressing changes that need to be made.
- Wear your Limbguard at night and during the day when at risk for falling or injuring your leg.

General guidelines for exercises

- While resting, keep your knee straight; avoid letting it stay in a bent position for extended periods of time.
- Lie on your stomach to stretch out your hips (this step is very important for people with above-knee amputations).
- Do not put pillows under your hips, knees or between your thighs (which will place the leg in an undesired position).
- Remember to always follow instructions from your physical therapist!

Exercises

It is extremely important to perform the exercises provided by your therapist. These exercises will prepare you for walking in your prosthesis. They also will help prevent contractures. Contractures are unwanted and make walking in a prosthesis more difficult.



Tip from Lee

“Continuing to exercise after physical therapy is important! It ensures you will not lose the strength gained in therapy, and it will improve your walking capabilities.”

Transtibial (below-knee) post-op exercises

Hip and knee range of motion

- Roll to sound side.
- Bring knee to chest while bending knee.
- Reach limb back as far as possible while straightening knee.

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Hip extension

- Place a towel roll under calf of residual limb.
- Tighten thigh muscle to straighten knee.
- Gently push down while tightening buttock muscles.
- Hold 3–5 seconds.

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Hip abduction

- Roll to sound side.
- Lift residual limb straight up and down.
- Keep hip and torso straight.

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Knee flexion/extension

- Place a towel roll behind knee.
- Gently bend and straighten knee over the towel roll.

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Hip adduction

- Place a towel roll or child's ball between thighs.
- Gently squeeze thighs together and down.
- Hold 3–5 seconds.

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Pelvic tilt

- Flatten back by tightening stomach muscles and tilting hips toward waist.
- Hold 3–5 seconds.

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Bridging

- With sound knee bent and foot flat, tighten buttock muscles while attempting to lift hips.
- You also can place a bolster under your residual limb.
- Hold for 3–5 seconds.

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Seated quad long arc

- Sit up straight.
- Straighten the knee of your stump completely and return to starting position.

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Straight leg raise

- Recline on your back, keep your stump straight and sound side bent.
- Raise your stump straight up and lower.
- Hold 3–5 seconds.

3 sets 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Quad set

- Keep your stump straight and legs close together.
- Straighten the knee on your stump as much as possible by tightening muscles on top of the thigh.
- Hold 3–5 seconds.

3 sets 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Tip from Lee

“Physical exercise is a large contributor to your recovery – and it helps your mental attitude. It’s good to have multiple exercise sessions each week.”

Transfemoral (above knee) post-op exercises

Hip flexion/extension

- Roll to sound side.
- Bring residual limb to chest.
- Reach limb back as far as possible.
- DO NOT MOVE TORSO.

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Hip extension

- Place a rolled towel under residual limb.
- Gently push down into towel while tightening buttock muscles.
- Hold for 3–5 seconds.

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Hip adduction

- Place a rolled towel between thighs.
- Gently squeeze thighs together and down.
- Hold for 3–5 seconds.

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Hip abduction

- Roll to sound side.
- Lift residual limb straight up and down.
- **KEEP HIP AND TORSO STRAIGHT.**

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Pelvic tilt

- Flatten back by tightening stomach muscles and tilting hips toward waist.
- Hold for 3–5 seconds.

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Bridging

- With sound knee bent and foot flat, tighten buttock muscles while trying to lift hips.
- You also can place a bolster under your residual limb.
- Hold for 3–5 seconds.

3 sets, 10–15 reps, 2 times per day



Tip from Lee

"Diet contributes to your recovery by providing your body with the necessary vitamins and nutrients you need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Someone once said: 'If it is worth doing, it is worth tracking.' This is very true about diet and exercise."

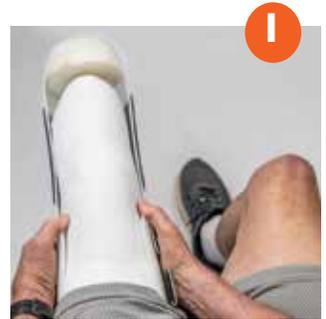
Limbguard

The Limbguard is a protective covering for your leg. It will reduce damage to your leg/suture line if you should fall, bump it in bed or experience any trauma to the leg. Wear it every night while sleeping or during the day when at risk for falling or injuring your leg. It also helps keep your leg straight.

Instructions

1. Place the Limbsock® over the limb. Be sure not to irritate any dressing or bandages (**Figure H**).
2. Place the limb inside of the plastic shell. Ensure the blue foam is flat and seated flush in the bottom (**Figure I**).
3. The molded foam piece goes over the front opening. The groove for the knee goes at the top. If there is enough space to tuck the foam between the plastic and limb, do so. If not, ensure it is overlapping the plastic edges on the sides and bottom.
4. Stretch the front panel over the foam, pull it tight and attach via Velcro on the sides of the plastic shell (**Figure J**).
5. Secure around your knee with the Velcro straps. (**Figure K**).

If you are remaining in bed or the wheelchair (in other words, you are not planning on getting up anytime soon), you can stop here.



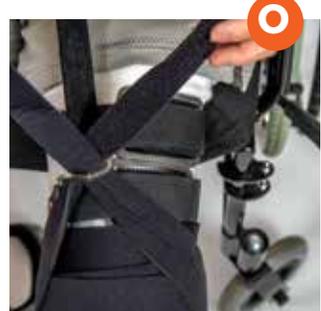
If you need additional help to keep the Limbguard from falling off while standing, follow these steps:

6. Wrap the Limbsleeve® so the straps are behind the leg and Velcro attaches to the front of the leg (**Figure L**).
7. Ensure that the bottom straps are securely underneath the plastic shell (**Figure M**).
8. The straps will come around to the front after securing the Limbsleeve.
9. Wrap the waist belt around the waist. You can trim any excess strap that remains. Ensure that the belt is tight on the waist.
10. Loop the bottom end of the Y-shaped Velcro strap around the waistband. The buckles should be hanging down (**Figure N**).
11. Feed the two Velcro straps facing up the leg through the buckles of the Y-shaped strap (**Figure O**).



Tip from Lee

“Wearing your Limbguard also helps keep your leg straight, preventing a contracture at the knee.”



Shrinker

It is normal for the amputated leg to shrink. Whatever your level of amputation, you will use a shrinker during the first two years after your amputation. (A shrinker is a tight, elastic stocking that evenly compresses the leg.)

You most likely will start wearing your shrinker once your staples or stitches are removed. The shrinker helps to decrease swelling and begins to shape your leg, which prepares it for a prosthesis.

Deep scabbing or other skin issues can delay wearing a shrinker. Your prosthetist will measure your leg for the appropriate size shrinker.

- Pull it up all the way, so there are no wrinkles or loose material at the end.
- If your shrinker becomes loose and is no longer squeezing your leg, contact your prosthetist. You likely will need to go down to a smaller size.

Cleaning and maintenance

- Follow the manufacturer's directions to clean the shrinker.
- Most recommend hand or machine wash on low settings with mild soap.
- Machine dry on low or hang to dry.

After receiving your prosthesis, you will need to continue wearing the shrinker any time your prosthesis is not on. Doing so will ensure your leg stays the same size and does not swell, which would prevent you from getting into your prosthesis. Never wear the shrinker underneath your liner.

Putting on your below-knee shrinker

- If the shrinker has silicone beads on the top, fold down the top of the shrinker. Using both hands, scrunch down the shrinker to the seam on the bottom and stretch the opening. The seam of the shrinker should be horizontal (or from side to side) before pulling the shrinker onto the limb (**Figure P**).
- Pull up the shrinker on the sides as you travel up the limb.
- The shrinker should completely cover the knee and go onto the thigh. The shrinker is very snug. If your limb still is healing, it may be difficult to put on at first. It may be easier to put on with assistance from another person.
- Make sure the shrinker is pulled taut with no wrinkles. If the shrinker has silicone beads on the top, flip the top back up so that it is touching the skin. The shrinker must be pulled up all of the way at all times. This may require you to pull up the shrinker several times throughout a day to keep it snug. The shrinker may fall off while you are sleeping. If this happens, just remember to pull it back on as soon as you can (**Figure Q**).
- Wear the shrinker at all times, day and night, except when you are cleaning it or bathing. When you are cleaning the shrinker, a second shrinker or an elastic bandage should be applied to the limb to prevent swelling.



The shrinker should not be loose at the bottom and should be worn at all times (except when bathing).

Putting on your above-knee shrinker

- Using both hands, scrunch down the shrinker to the seam on the bottom and stretch the opening. The seam of the shrinker should be from back to front with the opening or shorter length of the shrinker toward the inside of the leg.
- Pull up the shrinker on the limb and pull up the sides as you travel up the limb. The shrinker is very snug. If your limb still is healing, it may be difficult to put on initially. It may be easier to put on with assistance from another person.
- The shrinker should go completely up the thigh, and the waist belt must be attached around the waist. Make sure the shrinker is pulled taut with no wrinkles. The shrinker must be pulled up all of the way at all times. This may require you to pull up the shrinker several times throughout the day to keep it snug (**Figure R**).
- Wear the shrinker at all times, day and night, except when you are cleaning it or bathing. When you are cleaning the shrinker, a second shrinker or an elastic bandage should be applied to the limb to prevent swelling.



The ring should be snug against the bottom of your limb.