

First Step

A Guide for Adapting to Limb Loss

How Can I Meet Other Amputees?



Why Me?

How Can I Support My Family Now?



How Will I Take Care of Myself?

Are There Other Kids Like Me?

Will My Insurance Pay for My Prosthesis?



Has Anyone Else Ever Felt So Alone?

Amputee Coalition of America Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

You have the right to:

- Receive clear, complete information about your surgery, medical care and therapy.
- Take part in decisions affecting your health and well-being.
- Be involved in developing your plan of care.
- Set goals for what you want to achieve.
- Set goals for your physical and emotional well-being.
- Set goals for preventing other health conditions that may result from your amputation, including further surgery.
- Receive support from a certified peer visitor.
- Be informed about funding for healthcare.
- Be informed about returning to work and opportunities for recreation.

- Be informed about prosthetic and orthotic services, healthcare products and new technology.
- Select qualified healthcare providers.
- Ask for help when you are unhappy with healthcare products or the care you receive.

You have the responsibility to:

- Stay informed about healthcare products and services.
- Learn about healthcare products and services that are appropriate, safe and effective for you.
- Express concerns about quality of care, billing practices, and healthcare products or services.

ACA Statement on Healthcare Provider Qualifications

The Amputee Coalition of America (ACA) recognizes that quality of care is one of the most pressing issues facing amputees today. The ACA, therefore, supports efforts to set a minimum level of qualification for practicing prosthetists throughout the United States to ensure that amputees continue to have access to an appropriate level of care. At the time of printing this publication, three federal agencies – Medicare, Medicaid and the Department of Veterans Affairs – reimburse providers who are certified by either the American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics (ABC) or the Board for Orthotist/Prosthetist

Certification (BOC) and/or who are licensed to practice by their respective state. The ACA considers these to be the minimum provider qualifications.

Additionally, the ACA supports increasing resources for the education and training of healthcare providers, including prosthetists, physicians, physical therapists, social workers, educators and other professionals, on the physical, psychological, educational, vocational and professional issues associated with limb loss so that the standards can be elevated to a higher than minimum level.



Questions. That's what this – the 4th edition of *First Step* – is all about. And, of course, the answers to those questions.

As a prospective or new amputee, you probably have all kinds of questions about what amputation will mean to your life and how you will deal with it.

Through this publication, the Amputee Coalition of America intends to answer many of those questions and to recommend where you can find the answers to many others.

This publication is not intended to be comprehensive; it is, however, a thorough introduction to what you need to know about life without a limb. Because it is aimed at a wide variety of audiences (upper- and lower-limb amputees, young and old, males and females, people who will decide to use prostheses and people who will not), it cannot fulfill all of the information needs of every amputee.

That's where our National Limb Loss Information Center (NLLIC) comes in. (See pages 21-22.)

When you have questions that are not addressed in this publication or want more information related to your individual circumstances, you can contact the NLLIC, and its information specialists can compile a more-detailed packet of information just for you – free of charge in the United States.

Reading *First Step* is, however, an important "first step" on your road to recovery and ultimate success as a person with a limb difference.

In these pages, you will learn about the new experience of limb loss, how to work with healthcare providers, how to



understand and cope with your emotions, peer support, relationships, body image, rehabilitation, insurance, education, employment, and much more. And one of the most important things we hope you will learn here is how to prevent additional problems that might be caused by your limb loss, such as obesity, diabetes, osteoporosis, fall injuries, back, hip, shoulder and knee problems, and even additional amputations. We have also included a resources section on pages 125-128. There you will find more information on topics that are of special interest to you.

Since 1986, the ACA has worked to make sure that people with limb differences have access to the information they need. During that period, we've helped thousands of amputees deal with their loss and excel in their new life. With the right information, you too can be successful. We provide the information and highly encourage you to use it to improve your health and life.

First Step (Permit Number 80096) is published biennially by the Amputee Coalition of America, 900 E. Hill Avenue, Suite 285, Knoxville, TN 37915-2568. *First Step* is partially supported by cooperative agreement #E11/CCE419270 from the National Center on Birth Defects and Disabilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC, the sponsoring organizations, or the Amputee Coalition of America (ACA). It is not the intention of the ACA to provide specific medical advice but rather to provide readers with information to better understand their health and healthcare issues. The ACA does not endorse any specific treatment, technology, company or device. Consumers are urged to consult with their healthcare providers for specific medical advice or before making any purchasing decisions involving their care. No funding from the CDC is used to support ACA advocacy efforts. ©2005 by ACA; all rights reserved. This magazine may not be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission of the ACA.

First Step

Volume 4, 2005

Published biennially by
Amputee Coalition of America
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ACA Mission

To reach out to people with limb loss and to empower them through education, support and advocacy.

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