

Falls guidance for amputees

Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for people who have had a leg amputation. It will advise you how to try and prevent a fall, tell you what to do if you have a fall and suggest different ways to get up off the floor.

Am I likely to fall if I have had a leg amputation?

As an amputee you are more likely to fall for a variety of reasons.

What can I do to help prevent a fall?

You can prevent falls by:

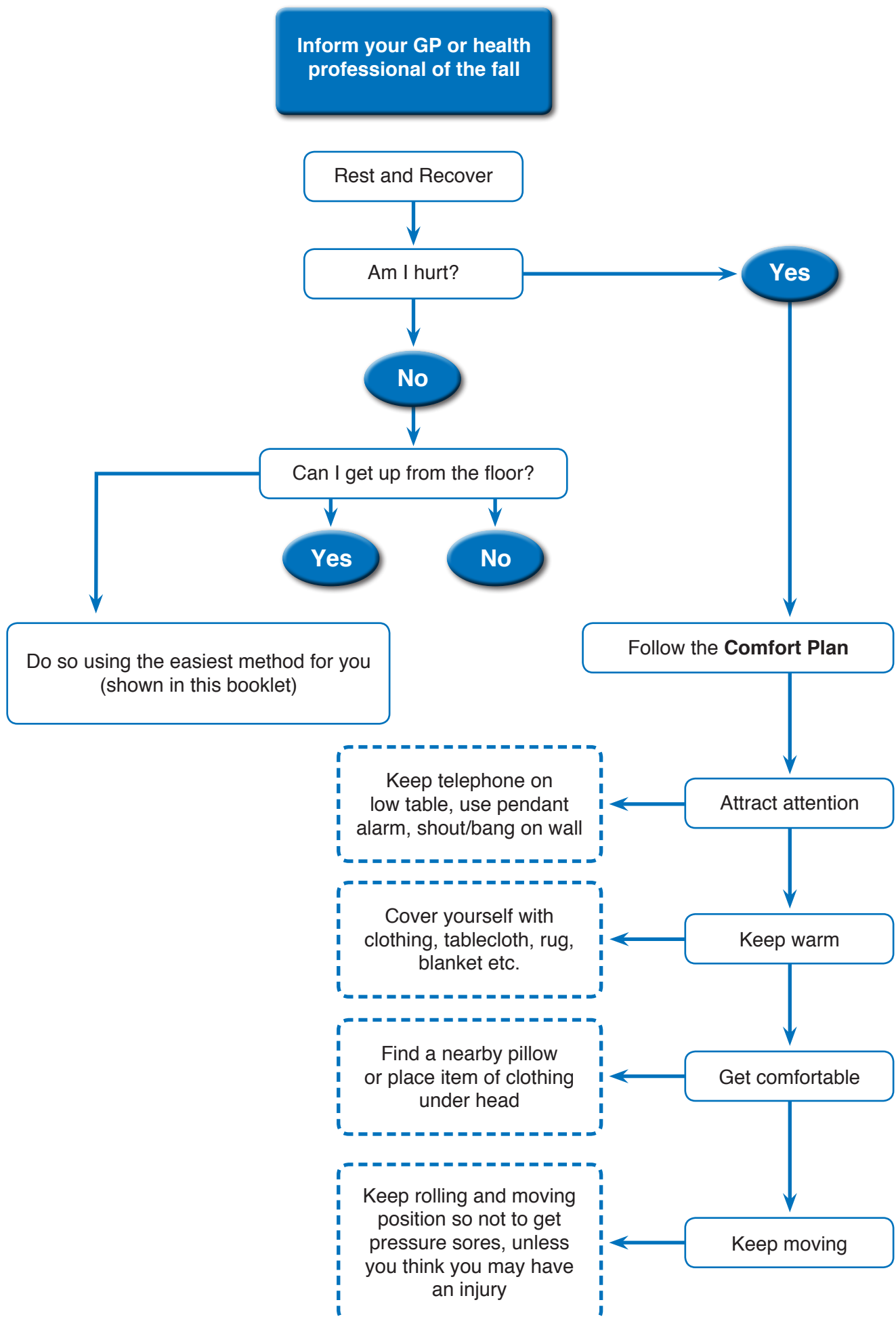
- Being aware that the feeling of still having your missing limb (your phantom limb) may cause you to try to stand on that leg, even when not wearing an artificial limb
- Making sure you drink enough water
- Limiting your alcohol intake. GPs recommend that you drink no more than 14 units a week
- Making sure you keep active as inactivity leads to weak muscles and poor balance
- Making sure you don't hurry, especially to the toilet. If you have continence problems then please talk to your GP
- Making sure your eyes are regularly tested and using the glasses you are prescribed
- Making sure the medication you are on is regularly checked, especially if you feel dizzy when you stand up
- Placing your most frequently used items in an easy to reach place
- Making sure there is good lighting, no loose rugs, no uneven or wet flooring, no trailing flexes and not too much clutter at home
- Talking to your GP about a physiotherapy referral if you are feeling unsteady or have lost your confidence when walking

What should I do if I fall?

Follow the instructions below and remember if you can't get up it's very important to:

- Keep warm
- Keep comfortable
- Keep moving

What to do if you fall:



Advice on how to get up off the floor

1. People with any level amputation could to this technique:

- Place a low stool or cushion in front of a chair, which has its back to the wall (or will not move)
- Position your bottom in front of it
- Bend your remaining leg and place your foot flat on the floor
- Place your hands behind you on the cushion/stool
- Push with your leg and at the same time use your hands to lift your bottom from the floor onto the cushion/stool.
- Use the same technique to lift yourself up onto the chair
- This technique can be done in several stages if needed or straight up from the floor if you have enough strength.
- You should have been shown these techniques by your physiotherapist. If you would like further practice please contact the Prosthetic Centre physiotherapist.

2. If you have a below knee amputation you could try this technique:

- Stay calm and get your breath back
- When you are ready roll to one side
- Using your arms push yourself up into side sitting
- Using your arms push yourself up onto your knees
- Crawl to the nearest piece of sturdy furniture (something that is unlikely to move if you put your weight onto it)
- Put your hands onto the piece of furniture and bring your remaining foot forwards and place the foot flat on the floor
- Push through your arms and leg to push yourself up, turn and sit down

Is there anything else I should do?

- Contact your Prosthetist so that your artificial limb can be checked if necessary.
- If you notice problems e.g. damage to your skin, pain (in a joint) - make an appointment to see your GP
- If your fall has affected your walking or you are worried about your balance then please contact the Prosthetic Centre physiotherapist

Other advice

Walking aids

- Keep a check on wear of rubber ferrules on sticks, crutches or frames. They should have grooves and NOT be smooth in appearance
- Be careful where you leave your walking aid - it could be tripped over
- Do not use another person's walking aid - it may not be suitable for you

Wheelchair use

- Make sure that if you need it, your wheelchair is easily accessible at night
- Make sure you put your wheelchair brakes on when getting in and out of your wheelchair
- Always move footplates out of the way when transferring from/to the wheelchair

Footwear

- Wear shoes/slippers that are comfortable, supportive, fit properly and have non-slip soles.
- If you wear a prosthesis make sure you wear a shoe or slipper with it
- All footwear used should have been set by your prosthetist on the artificial limb so the limb is lined up correctly.

Planning ahead

- Consider getting a pendent alarm or mobile phone to keep on your person
- Place cushions and blankets around the house at floor level so that, if you do fall, you can keep warm and comfortable while waiting for help
- Ensure that your home is well lit
- Consider keeping the hall light on at night in case you need to get up to go to the toilet, and always use your bedside light when getting up at night
- Clear away clutter and rugs, especially in the hall/landing and doorways.

If you need any further information or advice then please contact your occupational therapist or physiotherapist at the Prosthetic Centre.

Useful contacts

Dorset Prosthetic Centre

Royal Bournemouth Hospital, Castle Lane East, Bournemouth, Dorset BH7 7DW

0300 019 4363 (use this number to make an appointment with your prosthetist, or to speak to the physiotherapist or occupational therapist.)

Age UK

Information on falls prevention, exercise classes, and handyman services in some areas.

Call free on **0800 169 6565** or see ageuk.org.uk/falls

Later Life Training

Exercise classes www.laterlifetraining.co.uk

Limbless Association

Provide support to amputees and the limb-loss community.

Advice on managing as an amputee and exercise opportunities.

The Limbless Association

Unit 10, Waterhouse Business Centre, 2 Cromar Way, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 2QE

01245 216670 Helpline: **0800 644 0185**

www.limbless-association.org

The Royal Bournemouth Hospital, Castle Lane East, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH7 7DW

Author: **Tim Randell** Date: **January 2022** Version: **Two** Review date: **January 2025** Ref: **547/21**

t: **01202** 303626 w: www.uhd.nhs.uk : **@UHD_NHS** : **@UHTrust** : **@uhd_nhs**