



Understanding Below-Knee Amputations (BKA)

People with diabetes are 8–24 times more likely to require lower limb amputations than those without. African Americans are four times more likely to experience amputations than White Americans. Of the 1.8 million individuals living with amputations in the U.S., below-knee amputations (BKA) are the most common, primarily affecting those aged 65 and older.

Causes

Trauma: Severe injuries from accidents or burns leading to fractures or nerve damage.

Diabetes: Poor circulation from peripheral vascular disease (PVD) can cause tissue deterioration, the leading cause of BKA.

Recovery Process

Healing after BKA takes 2–8 weeks and varies based on age and overall health. Immediate care involves:

Skilled Nursing Visits: Pain management, wound care, mobility promotion, psychological support, and monitoring for complications.

Physical Therapy: Focus on stretching, range of motion, and learning basic movements like rolling in bed or sitting safely.

Occupational Therapy: Support with daily living skills (bathing, dressing) and adaptive equipment recommendations.

Protecting the surgical site is critical to avoid delays in recovery.



Phantom Limb Pain & Psychological Impact

Phantom limb pain—sensations like stinging or burning in the amputated limb—typically fades within six months. Emotional effects like fear, grief, and depression are common. Counseling and support groups are essential to address these challenges.

Prosthetic Use & Care

Prosthetics restore mobility and independence but require proper preparation and maintenance:

Strength Building: Maintain strong leg muscles for easier prosthetic use.

Prosthesis Hygiene: Regularly clean liners, socks, and sockets to prevent infections.

Residual Limb Care: Wash daily, monitor for redness or skin breakdown, and address issues immediately to avoid complications

Key Takeaway

While life-changing, BKA can significantly improve quality of life for those previously living with pain. Advances in prosthetics allow many to achieve independence and maintain active lifestyles after surgery. Supportive care, therapy, and self-maintenance are vital for successful recovery.

BHI At Home is here for you. Please contact our office for more information.

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