

# Quick Facts On Phantom Limb Pain

## What is phantom limb pain?

“the perception of pain or discomfort from a limb that is no longer there!<sup>1</sup>”

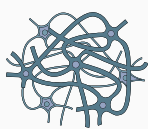
Up to 80% of patients experience phantom limb pain post amputation.<sup>2</sup>

## Why does phantom limb pain occur?<sup>1,3</sup>

Research is unclear on exactly what causes phantom limb pain but several theories suggest **FOUR MAIN FACTORS** that likely coincide in the pain experience.



### Nerve Changes



- During any surgery there is trauma to the body and the nervous system takes over by trying to reconnect with remaining nerve endings and new nerve sprouts.
- This is called peripheral sensitization and sometimes causes painful signals and hypersensitivity.

### Prior Experiences

- Prior pain related experiences can influence phantom limb pain severity.
- If you have experienced pain or chronic pain, resources are listed below on ways to help.



### Brain Maps<sup>4</sup>

- Your brain is like a road map with signs and signals for specific locations in your body.
- The brain still keeps the map even after a loss of a limb so signals are still being sent even though the road is no longer there.

### Spinal Cord Interference



- Similar to nerve changes, this is where signals being sent to the brain become hypersensitive.
- Basically the signals go crazy and are sent to areas of the body that no longer need them because the map still exists.

## Are there ways to help?<sup>5</sup>

#### Peripheral Interventions:

- Edema Management
- Wound & Scar Care
- **Prosthetic management**
- ROM and strength for trunk and residual limb

#### Central Interventions:

- **Graded Motor Imagery**
- **Mirror Therapy**
- **Sensory Discrimination**
- Laterality training

#### General Interventions:

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**
- Support Groups
- Mind-fullness and Salient activities

## Resources for Post-Amputation



**Hanger**  
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**amputee**  
coalition™

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