

Lower-Extremity Recovery: Exercises for Below-Knee Amputees

By [MCOP Team](#) August 13, 2019 [living with your prosthetic](#), [Amputee Support](#)

Whether you're preparing for or recovering from a below-knee amputation, there are a number of amputee fitness routines out there to help you rebuild your strength, regain your balance, and come closer to reclaiming a more active lifestyle.



Here, we'll go over some of the most effective below-knee amputation rehabilitation exercises that will be helpful to almost anyone, no matter how far along they are in recovery.

Strength Training Exercises for Below-Knee Amputees

One effective strength-training exercise involves hanging weights from the residual part of your amputated limb, then building up the weight capacity until it gets higher and higher – in other words, a fairly typical weight-training procedure, only it's been adapted for a below-knee amputee.

A good way to start out this exercise is by lifting your amputated limb with no weights at all at first, moving it in as many directions as possible for as many times as possible. After a while, and with your physical therapist and/or doctor's permission, you can begin adding more and more weight to heighten the intensity of your workout.

You should aim to progressively add more weight to continue challenging yourself, but with only a certain amount of repetitions. Again, the exact amount is something you should always clarify with your physician!

Amputee Balance Exercises for Below-Knee Amputations

Following a below-knee amputation, your balance will never be quite the same – and that's okay. It simply means you'll need to retrain your brain to accommodate your new situation and all that will take some practice. Your balance system is very complex, and in little or no time, it can be compromised if it is not being used. The good news is that your balancing muscle memory can be restored quickly with the right training and activities. Of course, like with any other recovery-related exercises, all balance training should be cleared by your physician or PT before starting.



With that said, you can help your brain adjust to your new normal by practicing very simple activities, such as:

- Standing as much as during your daily activities such as brushing your teeth, washing, doing the dishes, or even just loading the dishwasher.
- Reaching out for objects while sitting, kneeling down, or standing with even pressure placed on your prosthesis for as long as possible.

- Performing mini squats where you remain standing with even pressure on both feet and your knee bent just a little bit. While doing this, attempt to turn from side to side as many times as possible. Try this first without your prosthesis (carefully), then again with your prosthesis.

Also, being able to balance on your prosthesis with the full weight of your body is essential if you're aiming to walk smoothly and confidently again. To help you accomplish this, you can:

- Lean over while putting your weight onto your prosthetic leg for varying periods of time. Try this while standing still or walking!
- Repeatedly (and gently) kick a ball across the room with your prosthetic leg.
- Roll a tennis ball back and forth and side to side under your foot on both sides. See how quickly you can gain control over the ball using your balance.
- Hold onto a rail when lifting your non-prosthetic leg up to the step, then bring it back down to the floor. Repeat as many times as possible (or as recommended).
- Practice balancing exclusively on your prosthetic leg, timing yourself each day and trying to beat your record the next.