

# A Prosthetics Primer

## Modern technology improves outlook for people living with limb loss

by Abby Malik, *Staff Writer*

According to statistics, nearly 2 million people in the United States live with limb loss. Using modern technology, prosthetics have provided many of these individuals with new outlooks on the future after a life-changing accident or illness. More than 500 people in America lose a limb each day, according to the national organization Amputee Coalition ([www.amputee-coalition.org](http://www.amputee-coalition.org)). This organization works to ensure amputees don't go through their journeys alone.

During Limb Loss Awareness

Month this past spring, Shayne Adkins, clinical director and vice president of Hi-Tech Artificial Limbs in Lexington, discussed on WKYT the fact that 60 percent of limb loss is preventable.

"With limb loss awareness, you want to take into account what's the main source or cause of most amputations, and that's diabetes," Adkins said. "It's important to realize that there are ways you can take care of yourself. It becomes that much more important to take care of your feet as a diabetic. We want to make people aware there are things you should be doing on a daily basis."

Companies such as Hi-Tech Artificial Limbs provide comprehensive prosthetic technology for an array of individuals who need a device for a lower limb, upper limb or specialized area. While a doctor's prescription is required before a prosthetic device can be created, Hi-Tech can provide an initial consultation without one.

One question Hi-Tech frequently receives is, "Will I be able to do all the things I did before I lost my limb?" According to the company's Website ([www.hi-techartlimbs.com](http://www.hi-techartlimbs.com)), the majority of people who lose a limb can get back to normal within several months. How well an individual functions depends primarily on his or her personal goals, a comfortable prosthetic fitting, good follow-up care and a positive attitude from everyone involved in the person's recovery.

Learning to use a new prosthesis isn't a simple task. The process takes patience, strength, time and perseverance. Patients should work with a therapist to get the most out of using a new device. A therapist can help an individual learn to do many things, including taking care of the prosthetic limb, properly taking it on and off, moving on different types of surfaces including stairs, being prepared for emergencies, performing normal work, home and car activities and getting back into recreational activities.

According to the Amputee Coalition, 250 adults lose a leg each day because of diabetes. Seven out of 10 of those amputations could have been prevented.

Since diabetes lowers blood flow and sensation to a person's feet, the coalition offers a guide called "Take a Seat, Check Your Feet" for diabetics to follow in order to maximize foot health. Here are some tips from the guide:

- After a shower or bath is the best time to do a foot examination. Use both hands to check for sores, scratches or lumps on the bottom of the foot because even the smallest cracks can get infected.
- Check for temperature changes from one part of the foot to another. A temperature change might indicate low circulation or infection.
- Look out for sores, bruises and thin, shiny or hairless skin on top of the foot.
- Look between toes for redness, blisters or sores.
- Check for ingrown toenails with puffy and red skin along the nail and tenderness or pain.

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