

Authored by Amputee Coalition's Upper Limb Advisory Committee

Finding a prosthetist who understands the unique issues involved with upper-limb amputation is important in getting the best functional outcome with upper-limb prostheses. Unfortunately, not all prosthetists have wide experience fitting persons with upper-limb loss, which is relatively uncommon. (Estimates of major limb loss cite 15 times as many lower-limb amputees as upper-limb amputees.¹⁾)

While there are some things in common with fitting any prosthesis, skill in addressing the mobility issues of lower-limb loss may not translate into an understanding of the functionality issues of upper-limb loss.

The Amputee Coalition's Upper Limb Loss Advisory Committee suggests the following questions to help you evaluate a prosthetist's experience and comfort level with upper-limb prostheses:

- Have you fit many people with my amputation level?
- How many upper-limb patients have you fit in the past 6 months? In the past 12 months?
- May I speak with another client for whom you have made a similar prosthesis to what I will wear?
- Are you certified through any professional organizations?
- Is your lab equipped to make repairs to my prosthesis or will it be sent out to another location?
- Is your office "in network" with my insurance plan? If not, what are my options?
- If there is a difference between what my insurance pays and what you charge, am I responsible for paying the difference?
- What are my options regarding type of prosthesis?
- What are the pros and cons of each type?
- What is your comfort level and familiarity with specific socket designs and with various manufacturers' components?
- What are my options regarding the fit of my prosthesis?
- What are my options regarding the appearance of my prosthesis?
- Do you work with a therapist or therapy group on training for optimal use and success?
- Are you willing to work with me to find the best prosthetic tools to use in my daily activities?

Your prosthetist does his or her best work when you take an active part in the process. Questions like these can help you establish that role from the beginning of your relationship.

See also:

Working Together for a Successful Outcome <http://www.amputee-coalition.org/resources/a-successful-outcome/>

ⁱ Kathryn Ziegler-Graham, PhD, et al. "Estimating the Prevalence of Limb Loss in the United States - 2005 to 2050," Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation 89 (2008): 422-429.