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Driving as an Amputee: What You Need to Know

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People who have undergone amputation can still drive and retain their independence.

If you have recently experienced limb loss, rest assured that there are modified ways to get back to doing all your normal day-to-day activities. This guide was created for new amputees to learn about how to drive with their amputation and what car modifications may be required.

Can I Drive After I Have Lost a Limb?

People with all levels of upper or lower extremity amputation can still drive a car. Depending on your injury and prosthesis, you may need to choose an automatic transmission and require modifications to the car to drive safely.

There have even been advanced car modifications designed for people with quadrimembral amputation.

When you feel ready to drive, first consult with your doctor, physical therapist and prosthetist. They will determine if you are physically ready, and offer advice on car modifications or prosthetic needs. In some cases a prosthesis can aid in driving, in others, the driver may be more comfortable removing their prosthesis while driving.

In terms of the legality of driving as an amputee, you will need to report your injury to your state's driving licensing center. They will then provide you with any steps required to continue to drive legally, often this is retaking your license exam and additional endorsement on your license.

Driving With an Arm, Hand or Partial-hand Amputation

This section outlines driving considerations and car modifications for those who have lost all or part of their arms or hands.

Partial-Hand Amputation or Finger Amputation

Whether you will need special modifications to your car depends on the extent of your injury. You may be able to control the car as normal or with minor modifications using your prosthesis or residual limb. If your grip is compromised or you can no longer spin the wheel or use the dashboard properly, you may need some of the modifications described below for arm and hand amputations.

Single Arm: Above Elbow or Below Elbow Amputation

If you have lost one arm, hand or part of a hand, you may need special modifications to your car. A steering knob or wheel spinner can be added to your car to provide confident one-hand steering control. Depending on which arm or hand was amputated, you will also likely need modified dashboard controls so you can easily access your turn signals, wipers and headlights.

Full or Partial Amputation of Both Arms or Hands

If you have lost both arms or have limited function in one or both arms, you can benefit from a foot steering system. These complex and sensitive systems allow for the foot to not only control steering but activate all the functions of the dashboard using just one foot.

Driving with a Foot, Single or Double Leg Amputation

This section outlines driving considerations and car modifications for those who have lost all or part of their legs or feet.

Left Leg: Above Knee Amputation or Below Knee Amputation

If you have lost your left leg or foot, you can drive a standard automatic car using your



right leg as normal.

Right Leg: Above Knee Amputation or Below Knee Amputation

If you have lost your right leg or foot, you can order a special modification to your car where the accelerator pedal is moved to the left side of the brake. You may also be able



to drive with the standard pedal configuration using your prosthetic leg or use the hand controls described below for double amputees.

Full or Partial Amputation of Both Legs or Feet

If you have lost both legs or have limited function in one or both legs, you might need to drive your car with special hand controls. There are different models and setups available. Often you will have a lever for your left arm to control accelerating and braking, with the addition of a wheel spinner or steering knob to assist with one-handed steering.



It is possible for a bilateral lower limb amputee to drive without modifications (hand controls), with the right prosthetic technology and setup. This is definitely something to talk with your prosthetist about.

Contact The Amputee Coalition For More Information

Learning to drive again or manage other day-to-day activities can be a long journey for the recent amputee. The Amputee Coalition is here to help those living with limb loss or limb difference recover from trauma, connect with one another and enhance their quality of life.

To request more resources on driving as an amputee, car modifications, and other topics related to your amputation, [reach out to one of our information specialists.](#)

The Amputee Coalition is a national 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.
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