

# WHAT BASIC INFORMATION SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT LIVING WITH A PROSTHETIC LEG?

**What materials are used to make a prosthetic leg?** The prosthetic socket (the part that the amputated limb goes into) is generally made of a carbon fiber weave, layers of fiberglass and cotton. The weave is held together with an acrylic laminating resin and formed under vacuum. This creates an extremely lightweight and strong socket. The "bones" of the prosthesis or the internal components are usually constructed of aluminum, stainless steel or titanium depending on the weight and activity level of the patient. Most prosthetic knees utilize a frame that is composed of one of these three metals; however, in many cases, they have hydraulic (fluid) or pneumatic (air) cylinders to control

the knee. The use of carbon fiber prosthetic feet has made them not only very light but also very flexible and energy efficient. These carbon springs propel the patient forward with every step they take.

**How much does an artificial leg weigh?** The weight of an artificial limb will depend on the type of limb and the components, but on average, a below knee prosthetic weighs four pounds and an above knee prosthetic weighs eight pounds. A natural leg is approximately 1/6 of your bodyweight.

**How long does a prosthetic leg last?** Depending on age, activity level and growth, the prosthesis can

last anywhere from several months to several years. In the early stages after limb loss, many changes occur in the residual limb that can lead to shrinking of the limb. The greatest amount of volume loss occurs within the first six months following amputation. This may require socket changes, the addition of socks, or changes in the alignment and/or replacement of the socket. Later on, increased activity levels and desire for additional function can necessitate a change in the prosthetic or its parts. Once the prosthesis is comfortably adjusted and the patient is functioning at the desired level of activity, the prosthesis needs only minor repairs or maintenance and can last for an average of three years.



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2624 F Street (661) 323-5944  
ACHILLESPO.COM 