

# e-news

September 2012



## Carers, Children & Youth Program

Limbs 4 Life is pleased to announce that, through three years of funding provided by nib foundation, child, youth and parent / carer services will be an integral aspect of our community servicing and research development. Since 2009 the Limbs 4 Life staff and Board of Management have strategically explored ways of developing and sourcing funding to provide specific services to these members of the amputee and limb different community. Our new child, youth and carer services aligns with our cornerstone adult service programs and, because of this, Limbs 4 Life will offer support from pre-birth through to adulthood.

In early 2012 nib foundation provided Limbs 4 Life with a three year grant to build the 'Carers, Children and Youth (CC&Y)' program. Prior to being selected

as a nib foundation partner Limbs 4 Life submitted an Expression of Interest, were then invited to submit a full application proposal and finally present to their Board Members. nib foundation was particularly impressed with the array of services Limbs 4 Life provides to the amputee community, our 'hands on' Board of Management, our strategic commitment over the past three years to develop child, youth and carer services and previous grants/ funding awarded to Limbs 4 Life.

This nib foundation funding and their partnership with Limbs 4 Life will allow us to: offer direct services (such as peer support for carers and activities for young people and families); establish a project Reference Committee comprised of a range of professional and community sector members;

and, collaborate with Monash University who will undertake research with carers and evaluate program delivery. We are pleased to welcome Dorothy Maciaga as the Project Manager of the CC&Y program. Dorothy has considerable working experiences, is finalising her psychology degree and was herself born with a congenital limb difference, so can bring an array of professional skills and personal amputee experience to managing this program and responding to the needs of children, youth and carers.

Limbs 4 Life is also grateful to those past funders that enabled us to build sustainable plans for supporting children, youth and their carer services. Grants from St George Bank, Allens Arthur Robinson and Vodafone 'World of Difference' assisted us over the last three years and we are grateful

to each of them for their assistance and support.

Limbs 4 Life is incredibly excited about the CC&Y program, and we will share more information

about the program development in upcoming E-News editions and on our website. In the meantime, if you would like further information about the program and how you can get involved please contact Dorothy on 1300 78 2231 or email [dorothy@limbs4life.com](mailto:dorothy@limbs4life.com)



## Participants wanted for study on pain

Researchers at Monash University are seeking volunteers to take part in a study investigating how we react to pain in other people. They are investigating whether people who have experienced major trauma or chronic pain react to pain in others differently to those who have not. Does an experience of pain or trauma make you more or less empathic to pain in others?

**Who:** Participants include individuals who have, and those who have not, experienced major trauma and/or chronic pain. People who have experienced amputation are wanted to participate in the group with prior trauma and/or pain. To participate you must be aged 18-65 with no prior brain injury, stroke, or current psychiatric or neurological illness.

**What:** Participation involves completing questionnaires in hard-copy or online (<http://alturl.com/gvtzf>). Participation usually takes only about **30-45 minutes** and you will receive a **\$15 Coles Myer voucher!**

The questionnaires ask about:

1. Your personal emotional and sensory experience in response to pain in others (~10-15 mins);
2. Empathy, depression & anxiety (~5 mins);
3. Your underlying pain conditions, their impact on your function, and emotional reactions to trauma (~15-20 mins, only for those with pain).

A small number of participants will be asked to complete the some questions again after 4 months.

Note: this study has approval from the Alfred Hospital Human Research Ethics committee (Project 308/11), and Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (Project CF11/2833 – 2011001664)

To participate contact the chief investigator (Melita) or go to <http://alturl.com/gvtzf>.  
Dr Melita Giummarra; School of Psychology and Psychiatry, Monash University  
email: [melita.giummarra@monash.edu](mailto:melita.giummarra@monash.edu) or Phone: 03 9905 0034 or 0439 641 211



## Skin Care for Amputees

Whether you are a new amputee or have been an amputee for years, skin care is always important. With the summer season upon us skin care and hygiene becomes a higher priority.

Whilst you are wearing your prosthesis the residual limb is confined in an airless socket, where heat accumulates and perspiration is trapped, creating a potential environment for bacterial or fungal growth. The residual limb is not designed for weight bearing so remember just wearing a prosthetic socket exposes the skin to potential pressures and friction. To try to prevent skin conditions that compromise the use of your prosthesis appropriate skin care should be an essential part of your daily hygiene regime. Not being an amputee I can only relate my recent experiences with hiking boots.....

checking my feet at regular intervals, keeping the skin dry by changing the damp socks early and relieving vulnerable bony prominences or pressure sensitive areas, certainly helped to prevent blisters..... always good on a 4 day hike in the middle of nowhere!

If you 'Google' skin care on the computer, you get a vast amount of advice but thankfully the majority contains the same key messages.

I could find no studies that have investigated prevention of skin problems in lower limb amputees, and only one paper discussed the types and incidence of skin problems that presented to a Canadian clinic. Over a 6 year period a total of 528 skin problems were documented in 337 residual limbs. The five most common problems were ulcers, irritations, cysts, calluses and

verrucous hyperplasia (excessive skin cell production that results in thickened skin with 'warty' papules.) This accounted for 80% of the skin disorders.

The skin is our first line defense mechanism against the invasion of infection and disease. It is comprised of several layers and is constantly regenerating. It has sweat glands and hair follicles which again can be sites

of irritation. For those involved with high level exercise/ activity you will be well aware of the importance of

skin care and stump hygiene to get you to the finish line.

### What are the most common skin disorders?

- General irritation/ rashes and abrasions

- Contact dermatitis- amputees can develop allergies to cleaning agents, skin products or prosthetic materials

- Oedema/ skin swelling- many amputees will experience fluctuations in their limb volume, for some this means they need to continue to wear compressive garments when they are not wearing their prosthesis

- Cysts- can result from constant 'rubbing' and may start as small bumps or nodules

- Folliculitis- Bacterial infection/ inflammation at the base of the hair follicle

- Adherent scar tissue- from slow wound healing or repeated skin breakdown, can be more susceptible to tension and breakdown

- Ulcers resulting from bacterial infection or poor circulation.

What can contribute to skin disorders?

- Direct trauma/ pressure

- Friction

- Loss of distal contact/ altered fit -e.g. blisters or in chronic situations verrucous hyperplasia.

- Heat and perspiration (Amputees have a reduced skin surface area to dissipate the heat and they tend to generate increased body temperature with most activities since more energy is required, leading to increased perspiration)

- Being a diabetic is going to make you more vulnerable to skin disorders, with reduced or altered nerve sensitivity and circulation to the extremities.

### Reminders:

#### Skin care

- Daily cleansing of the residual limb using a mild, non perfumed soap, preferably at the end of

the day. (The heat of the shower can make your limb swell and damp skin in a socket maybe more prone to irritation.)

- This must include a good rinse to remove soapy residues (another potential skin irritant).

- Follow this by drying the skin thoroughly with a clean soft towel.

- Whilst 'moisturizing' is not such a familiar concept to the male population, for amputees it is essential to keep the skin supple and in good condition.

- Use a non perfumed product that is applied at night after you have finished using the limb for the day. Creamy residues can be another source of skin irritation or infection.

- Keep well hydrated, drink plenty of non caffeinated fluids (water is best!) If you are not on a fluid restriction.

### For diabetics

- Again, dry cracked and itchy skin can be an entry point for 'bugs' and subsequent infection.

- Keep your blood sugar levels under control, when your 'sugars' are high the body loses fluid and becomes dehydrated ....leading to dry skin.

- For those on dialysis or fluid restrictions, your skin is likely to be even more dry...you may require additional moisturising throughout the day, maybe apply when on dialysis if you remove your limb during this time.

- Diabetics are likely to have altered temperature perception and should therefore avoid hot baths/ showers and always test the temperature prior to entering.

### Care of your socks and socket

- Newer socks do 'wick' away

the perspiration but more importantly it is essential to change your socks regularly, even more so during the warmer months.

- Carry a face washer or travel chammy'/ chamois to dry the limb thoroughly before re- donning.

- Carry spare socks in your handbag, backpack, glovebox in the car or start using a 'man bag'!

- Maintain dry socks in contact with your skin where possible.

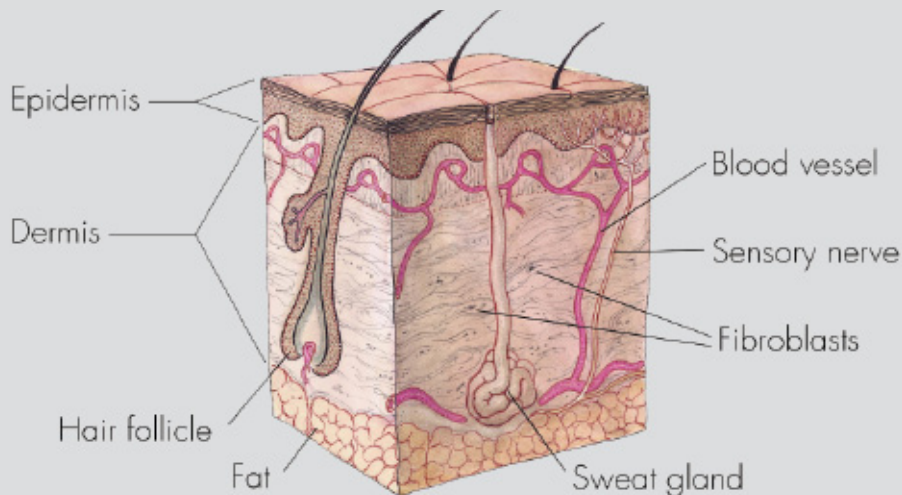
- At any time socks should be changed at least daily.

- Use mild soap e.g lux or velvet soap to wash the socks/ nylon sheaths and rinse thoroughly.

- Socket care- Remember to clean the liner and socket after removal at night (Maybe when you clean your teeth!!)

This seems to be part of the hygiene regime that is commonly missed!  
Prosthetic liners

- Some prosthetic liners and products



require particular attention, if you are unsure check with your prosthetist about what skin products and cleaning/ washing agents should be used. It is even more important not to leave residues on the skin with a lot of these products.

- If excessive perspiration is a problem with the prosthetic liners it may be recommended by

your therapists that you try an antiperspirant, discuss this prior to use.

#### Other Reminders:

- Always check the skin daily before and after using the prosthesis.

- A quick check is better than a major skin breakdown.

- Skin grafts often have very little sensation so require a few extra checks.

- Shaving is not recommended, the hair is protective for the skin and there is risk of irritating the base of the hair follicles and ingrown hairs.

- If your prosthesis doesn't fit well or with the impact of years of using a prosthesis, there is potential to develop thickened skin or callous which is more susceptible to breakdown.

- Likewise, when you start getting skin breakdown, the scar tissue will always be more fragile and more susceptible to breakdown than your original skin.

- Early wound management is a must...especially in the diabetic group. Seek professional advice if you have a wound that doesn't heal within 2-3 days.

- Signs of infection include: redness,swelling, warmth, pain,drainage or discharge and maybe accompanied by a rise in body temperature and blood sugar levels. If you develop a skin problem it is recommended to seek a prosthetic review ASAP.

- Where possible stay off the prosthesis until the problem area has healed.

- Otherwise take it easy....try to minimize use of the prosthesis. This will definitely assist and accelerate the healing process.

- Sunlight exposed areas should be protected.

- Utilise this good skin care advice to protect your other limbs.

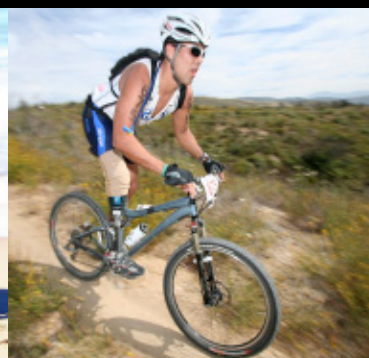
In summary good skin care and a well fitting prosthesis should keep your skin healthy.

*Helen Connor  
Physiotherapist  
Austin Health*

#### References:

Skin Problems in the Amputee clinic: Dudek N et al,American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation vol 85 (5): 424-429  
Caring for skin; Prosthetic skin care: ACA in co-operation with the US Army Amputee Patient care program  
The war Amps rehab  
Diabetic skin care: Canadian and American diabetic associations

## Amputee Awareness Week 4th - 11th October



The main causes of limb loss are

- Diabetes
- Vascular disease
- Cancer
- Trauma
- Infection
- Congenital Differences

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For more information please visit [www.limbs4life.com](http://www.limbs4life.com)

## Nicole McLean Stronger Now

On 12 October 2002, the beautiful island of Bali was hit by a deadly terrorist attack. It claimed the lives of 202 people and left 240 others severely injured. Nicole McLean had been in Bali for just six hours when she was caught in one of the explosions. That night she lost her arm and was left fighting for her life.

This is Nicole's extraordinary journey. Shown through her eyes, and through the eyes of friends and family who watched helplessly while the horror unfolded before them, this is a gripping personal account of what happened that fateful night and Nicole's difficult yet incredible journey towards recovery.

Ten years on, the scars from Bali have not faded. But while those left behind will never be forgotten, this book is a testament to the resilience and strength of spirit in those that survived. It is a story about hope, second chances and never giving up.

Nicole McLean lives in Victoria with her husband and son. She is a motivational speaker, Limbs 4 Life spokesperson and Bali bombing survivor. Stronger Now is her first book and is due to be released by Pan Macmillan Australia on October 1st.

[www.panmacmillan.com.au](http://www.panmacmillan.com.au)



## If No II Feet Are The Same – Why Do We Buy Shoes as Pairs? Size 7 Left, Size 8 Right – No Problem with IIFit!

An Australian first, Ascent Footwear and The Athlete's Foot are now selling shoes in split sizes (mismatched pairs) to help customers find perfect fitting footwear.

In August 2011, Ascent created a range of Men's & Women's shoes in the IIFit category for The Athlete's Foot so they could provide the perfect fit to their customers. The IIFit range of shoes can be sold as a traditional pair (size 7 left and size 7 right) – mismatched pair (size 7 left and size 8 right) or as an individual shoe (left or right).

Selling shoes as an individual size left and right rather than a traditional pair helps achieve a customised fit without the customer having to pay for a custom made shoe nor the wait as the shoes are in store.

With over 60% of the population having different sizes between their left and right feet, IIFit is the right solution to achieve the perfect fit. The IIFit range can also greatly assist those people with extra needs from their footwear, Polio & Clubfoot Sufferers, Diabetics and Partial or Full Foot Amputees.

The IIFit range from Ascent is available in the 145 The Athlete's Foot stores throughout Australia & New Zealand.

Visit your nearest The Athlete's Foot today to try a IIFit style for work or play – it all starts with fit!

[www.ascentfootwear.com.au](http://www.ascentfootwear.com.au) Phone: (07) 3265 5660

[www.theathletesfoot.com.au/ascent-shoes](http://www.theathletesfoot.com.au/ascent-shoes)





Find us on our NEW page

# facebook

Limbs 4 Life recently moved to a new facebook page that will allow us more functionality than the previous group.

If social networking is on your agenda go to [www.facebook.com/Limbs4Life](http://www.facebook.com/Limbs4Life) and "LIKE" us to show your support, keep updated with news & events and most importantly, be a part of the conversation!



## limbs4life



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