



# BeyondDuty+

## Amputations

Amputations among UK veterans are primarily linked to **blast injuries** sustained during deployments. This includes a significant number of individuals with **unilateral or bilateral limb loss**, often accompanied by complex trauma, burns, and traumatic brain injury (TBI).

### Causes of Amputation in Veterans

- **Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blasts**
- **Gunshot wounds**
- **Combat trauma from vehicles / rotary wing crashes**
- **Post-surgical complications (infection, vascular damage)**

Most combat-related amputees are **young and high-functioning**, requiring prosthetic solutions that support mobility, function, and return to work or sport.

### Common Secondary Musculoskeletal (MSK) Issues

Even with advanced prosthetics, limb loss can lead to chronic, secondary MSK problems, including:

#### Condition

#### Description

Overuse injuries

Especially in intact limbs due to compensatory gait or transfers

Back pain

Due to altered pelvic alignment or spinal loading



Phantom limb pain

Affects up to 80% of amputees; may persist for years

Residual limb pain

Linked to socket fit, neuromas, or scar sensitivity

Joint degeneration

Accelerated in the hips, knees, or spine of overusing side

Veterans often present years after discharge with MSK pain due to long-term prosthetic use, weight gain, or deconditioning.

## Management

### Acute & Post-Surgical Phase

- Managed through acute hospital care followed by rehabilitation in a specialist centre
- Early prosthetic fitting, pain control, and wound care

### Long-Term Multidisciplinary Care

- Ongoing follow-up at **Prosthetics Centres** (via regional limb-fitting services)
- Involves:
  - Prosthetist
  - Rehab Consultant
  - Physiotherapist
  - Psychologist / Mental Health Support
  - Occupational Therapy

### Rehabilitation Focus Areas

- **Core and hip strengthening** (to support prosthetic gait)
- **Postural control and balance**
- **Prosthetic gait re-education**
- **Energy conservation and pacing**
- **Strengthening of intact limb to prevent overload**
- **Management of phantom pain** (mirror therapy, TENS, desensitisation)

### Additional Considerations

- Many amputee veterans experience:

- **PTSD or moral injury**
  - **Vocational setbacks** (employment challenges)
  - **Relationship strain**
- A **bio-psycho-social** approach is essential for holistic care
  - Veteran amputees benefit from **peer support networks, adaptive sports, and tailored gym access**

## Contact Us

For more information and support, get in touch with our advisors and veterans with lived experience today.

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