

FACT SHEET

Osseointegration



What is osseointegration?

Osseointegration is a type of surgery that connects your artificial limb (prosthesis) to your bone using a metal implant. For some people it can improve comfort, movement and how the limb feels, compared with using a traditional socket prosthesis.

This procedure is funded by ACC. There is currently **no standard public funding pathway for Health NZ patients**. Talk to your clinical team about your options.

Why consider osseointegration?

People often explore this because they:

- Find **socket discomfort or skin issues** hard to manage.
- Experience **chafing, sweating, or volume changes** that affect socket fit.
- Want **better movement and control** – many people say the limb feels more “part of them”.
- Want to **avoid liners or suspension sleeves** that can cause irritation and reduced joint range of motion.
- Need a **secure, direct connection** between their limb and prosthesis for daily or work activities.
- It’s much simpler to put the prosthesis on and take it off.

However, **osseointegration isn’t for everyone**. It involves surgery, lifelong stoma care, an increased risk of infection, and in some cases, activity limitations.

You’ll need to weigh up the **possible benefits** and the **commitment required** with your clinical team.

Step 1 – Initial discussion

If you’d like to know more, start by talking with your prosthetist or rehabilitation team member.

They know your history and can help you work out whether it's worth exploring.

They can explain how osseointegration works, what's involved, and what the possible risks and benefits are for you.

If it seems suitable, the next steps can be arranged to refer you to the osseointegration clinic in Christchurch.

Step 2 – Assessment clinic

At the assessment clinic in Christchurch, you'll meet a specialist team that includes:

- Orthopaedic surgeon
- Clinical prosthetist
- Physiotherapist
- Clinical psychologist
- Occupational therapist

Together they'll look at your medical history, lifestyle and goals to discuss with you whether osseointegration is a safe and appropriate option for you.

You'll have the chance to ask questions and talk through what life with an implant is really like. You will usually have the opportunity to talk with another person who has already had osseointegration – through peer support.

Step 3 – Funding and approval

- After your assessment, the Christchurch team will provide reports and recommendations to ACC. ACC will review and decide whether they can fund your surgery and prosthetic parts.
- Talk with your case manager about what they will cover – this can include travel, accommodation, and income while you recover.

Step 4 - Surgery

If funding is approved, surgery takes place at

Burwood Hospital in Christchurch. It usually happens in two stages, about eight weeks apart.

You'll stay in hospital for about 1-3 days each time. You'll return home between surgeries but you won't be able to wear your old prosthesis, so lower limb amputees will need to use crutches and/or a wheelchair for mobility.

Step 5 – Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is a key part of recovery and takes time, patience, and daily effort. Your plan is personalised, but most people go through three phases:

Phase 1 – Loading and early rehabilitation (Christchurch)

- Starts around 5–7 days after your second surgery.
- You begin gently putting weight through the implant.
- By the end, you'll have a basic training prosthesis (usually with a locked knee if you are an above knee amputee). You'll use crutches or a walking frame for support.
- You'll then return home for 2–3 weeks to continue building tolerance and slowly increasing mobility.

Phase 2 – Fitting and rehabilitation (Christchurch)

- You go back to Christchurch for fitting of your definitive prosthesis.
- You'll begin slowly completing more walking and mobility training.

Phase 3 – Ongoing rehabilitation (at home)

You continue your rehabilitation and follow-up at **your local Peke Waihangā centre** with support from your team.

Important things to know

- Some health conditions, bone types or lifestyle factors may mean osseointegration isn't suitable.
- **You'll need to care for your stoma** (the small opening where the implant exits your skin) for life.
- **Infection is a lifelong risk.** Keeping your stoma clean and dry is essential.
- You may need to take special precautions when soaking the stoma underwater (**especially in public pools or spas**), as advised by your clinical team.
- **High-impact activities like running or jumping are not recommended**, as they increase the risk of damage to your bone and implant.
- Regular check-ups with your prosthetist and surgical team are important to monitor your implant and skin health.

Want to know more?

If you think osseointegration might be right for you, start by talking with your **local prosthetist and rehabilitation team**.

They'll explain the process and guide you through the next steps. You can also contact your **local Peke Waihanga centre** for more information.

Note – Osseointegration is a complex procedure that involves risks and a long rehabilitation period. Results vary between people. Your healthcare team will help you make an informed decision about whether this option is right for you.



For more helpful resources, please visit our website: www.pw.co.nz/resources.

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