

Frequently Asked Questions on Phantom Pain

Q. What is Phantom Pain?

A. Phantom Limb Pain is a pain or sensation felt somewhere within the amputated limb i.e. the limb that no longer exists, hence the term Phantom.

Q. Is it the same as Stump Pain?

A. No... it is important to distinguish between “Stump Pain” and “Phantom Pain”, especially as the “treatments” are very different. Unlike Phantom Pain, Stump Pain originates in the actual residual limb (stump).

Q. What are the symptoms of Phantom Pain?

A. This varies greatly from person-to-person, but it is often described as a crushing, burning or shooting pain / contraction (much like a clenched fist) in the missing part of the limb.

Q. What causes Phantom Pain?

A. This is a very complex issue and there are differing theories, as the exact cause is still unknown. One school of thought is that phantom pain is generated in the brain. After an amputation, the brain region responsible for sensation continues to send messages to the missing limb, without reply, leading to confusion and heightened activity / increased messages.

Q. How long does Phantom Pain last?

A. Again, this is very difficult to say as different people have different experiences. Some amputees never experience any Phantom Pain, whereas some have mild sensations and others have severe bouts. One thing that seems to be common is that Phantom Pain becomes less severe and less regular over time and most people have almost no Phantom Pain problems after the first year.