

Information on **PHANTOM PAIN**



Photograph by Thorenfeldt

IT'S BETTER TO LIGHT A CANDLE THAN TO CURSE THE DARKNESS

WHAT IS PHANTOM PAIN?

Is it really possible to feel pain in a part of the body that isn't there? Yes, because the amputation of a limb means a drastic change in the signals the brain receives from the body. Phantom pain belongs to the group of chronic central neuropathic pain. The missing limb is still on the brain's map of the body and the brain remembers pain from the moment at which the injury or amputation occurred. The body can suppress strong pain, but in the event of an amputation the opposite occurs, and pain is amplified (sympathetic activation).

WHO SUFFERS FROM PHANTOM PAIN?

Some people are either only slightly affected by phantom pain - or rarely not at all. Others may find that the pain gradually reduces or disappears over time after their amputation. Some experience very strong pain more or less continuously. Some usually have little or no phantom pain and others experience waves of intense and extreme pain. There is no standard answer to the occurrence and intensity of phantom pain, or to what can help avoid or reduce it.



HOW CAN YOU AVOID PHANTOM PAIN?

There are good possibilities of you being able to reduce or even avoid phantom pain if your amputation is on a planned date in a hospital. You should be assured a pain-free period of 3-4 days before the operation in the form of an epidural and peripheral anaesthetic to reduce and minimise the subsequent occurrence of phantom pain. Traumatic amputations and acute pain from accidents should be tackled as quickly as possible with morphine or other opiates to reduce pain and the occurrence of phantom pain. Planned surgery instead of traumatic can also have the further benefit of enabling more consideration to the subsequent fitting of the prosthetic limb.

CAN PHANTOM PAIN BE TREATED?

There is no one preferred form of treatment for phantom pain that works in every case. What may be a help to one patient will not necessarily help another. Some benefit from physiotherapy or TNS or acupuncture or stress relief or hypnosis. Some patients have benefited from using phantom pain-relieving liners inside their prosthetic limb when wearing it, and/or special socks on their stump at night in bed or at other times when not wearing their prosthetic limb, whilst others may need pain-relieving drugs prescribed by a doctor or other clinician. Neurontin, Tegretol and Rivotrill are the most commonly prescribed, but some patients have such strong and intense phantom pain that even stronger painkillers are required. Given that there is no standard answer to the occurrence of phantom pain - nor how it can be avoided or reduced - we recommend consulting a specialist at a pain clinic.

WHERE CAN YOU GET HELP?

Don't suffer in silence!. If you are suffering phantom pain, ask your doctor about a referral to a pain clinic for a specialist consultation.

Or you can contact **MOMENTUM** by phone 40 00 43 60 or email info@momentum.nu and we will refer you to where you can get the help you need. Alternatively, you can send in your questions to **MOMENTUM** on Facebook, and start a dialogue there. You can also contact us if you are a medical professional or next of kin to someone with phantom pain - we are at your service.



BECOME A MEMBER OF MOMENTUM – YOUR ASSOCIATION

There are many membership benefits, such as:

Peer support – experienced amputees and their families are available on a voluntary basis to you and to others sharing the same situation all over the country through meetings and dialogue.

Forums – you will also be welcome at local and national get-togethers, courses and theme evenings to share experiences and achievements and inspiration, all at a heavily subsidised price for you as a member. You can save the equivalent of your membership fee just by attending one event! And as a member of MOMENTUM you can stay at a number of hotels at a reduced rate also when you travel on business or leisure. There are big savings to be made as well as comradely improvements to your quality of life.

Livsglede – a topical and encouraging membership magazine with the latest news on prosthetics and other important and inspiring know how. Livsglede is read by 'everyone' – amputees, families, doctors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, orthopaedic engineers, clinical technicians, care personnel, nursing personnel and others all working to secure and sustain the rehabilitation of amputees or individuals with congenital limb loss.



Information – tips, news and information important to amputees and their families in printed and electronic format, on Facebook and our own website at www.momentum.nu or by contacting MOMENTUM on +47 40 00 43 60 or info@momentum.nu where we can also refer you to the help you need.

Political lobbying – we do not take no for an answer, but actively engage in political lobbying to ensure and improve the help you and other amputees and families can get, so that you can make best of what there is.

Go to www.momentum.nu for an enrolment form or you can contact MOMENTUM by phone on +47 40 00 43 60 or e-mail info@momentum.nu to join.



MOMENTUM
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Momentum is a nationwide user association for amputees and their families. Membership is also open to friends, healthcare professionals, institutions, workshops and suppliers.

Our vision is to increase quality of life and inspire amputees, their families and everyone working with the rehabilitation of amputees to make the best of what is available.

Momentum was founded in 1996 and focuses on peer support, creating forums, member magazine, printed and electronic information and political lobbying.

“It's better to light a candle than to curse darkness” is Momentum's motto, and is a strong indicator of our beliefs and values.

Become a member of your own association - join us today!

Postboks 49 Skøyen, 0212 Oslo
Tel: 40 00 43 60 Fax:40 00 43 61
info@momentum.no
www.momentum.no

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