

Phantom Limb Pain

Phantom Limb Pain Overview

Phantom limb pain is described as the irritation instigating from where an amputated limb used to be, and may vary in intensity from mild to severe discomfort felt in the amputated area. Phantom limb pain is a condition often experienced by people who've had an arm or leg removed. However, the removal of other body parts through surgery may also be the cause of this pain. Phantom limb pain can also occur in people who are born without limbs and people who are paralyzed. Phantom limb pain may decrease or completely disappear overtime, but sometimes it becomes hard to manage the painful condition and requires medical help.

Phantom Limb Pain Causes

Several factors are believed to cause phantom limb pain, including damaged nerve endings, scar tissue at the amputated area, and the retention of pre-amputation ache by the brain.

Although the troubling limb has been removed, yet the nerve endings present at the amputated area persistently send pain signals to the brain making it think that the limb is still present. Sometimes the pain does not give this signal that a certain body part is still present, but aching sensations can still be felt due to the injured nerves.

It's hard to identify the exact cause of phantom limb pain, but mixed signals from brain can be the cause. Many experts believe that after the amputation, spinal cord and brain lose contact with the missing area and then try to find it through non-specific ways. This results in phantom limb pain. Sometimes, the brain links to some other area to receive information on the missing area which also causes tangled sensory wires following with a hurtful feeling.

Phantom Limb Pain Symptoms:

Phantom limb pain can be detected by the following symptoms:

- Tingling and cramping in the amputated area
- Feeling of cold and warmth in the portion of removed limb
- Experiencing sensations you felt before amputation, giving you a feeling like the limb hasn't been removed at all
- Discomfort arising from the part of the limb farthest from the body, such as the arm of an amputated hand

Phantom Limb Pain Diagnosis

No such exact measure has been devised to diagnose phantom limb pain. But professional doctors can diagnose it by identifying the circumstances, frequency and intensity of the pain symptoms.

If you really need help with your phantom limb pain, seek our expert doctors at PacificPain Care Consultants, and tell us exactly what you feel. This will allow the doctor to analyze your pain better and suggest medications or therapies accordingly.

Phantom Limb Pain Treatment

Phantom limb pain treatment entails little success if you consult the wrong physicians. Therefore, to treat the ache effectively you need to consult the doctors who have already treated patients with the same condition. Pacific Pain Care Consultants is a well recognized health center, experienced in curing many patients suffering from the phantom limb pain. Some general treatments for phantom limb pain include:

- Usage of pain medications such as anti-depressants, pain relievers, neuroleptics, anticonvulsants, beta-blockers, and sodium channel blockers.

PROCEDURES

Peripheral Nerve Blocks, Femoral, Sciatic, Brachial Plexus Blocks

Sympathetic Blocks like Lumbar sympathetic block for Phantom Leg Pain or Stellate ganglion Blocks for Phantom Arm Pain.

- Applying heat to the affected area
- Surgery to remove scar tissue entangling the sensory nerves
- Physical therapy
- Neurostimulation techniques such as spinal cord stimulation or deep brain stimulation
- Spinal Cord Stimulation (SCS)
- Treatment through the use of an electrical stimulator, by which the nerve pathways in the spinal cord are stimulated by an electric current, lessening the phantom limb pain
- Vibration therapy, stump massage, acupuncture, and hypnosis are some of the effective treatments
- Mirror box has emerged as a new treatment for phantom limb pain, in which artificial visual feedback enables the patient to move the phantom limb and relieve the ache

Phantom Limb Pain Prevention

Here are some preventive measures you can follow in order to relieve phantom limb pain and reduce your discomfort to quite an extent.

- In order to divert your focus from the affected limb, find and engage in activities that interest you. This is extremely helpful for temporary aching conditions.
- Make exercise a vital part of your daily routine. This will not only distract you from the pain, but also keep your body in shape.
- If your pain physician has advised you to take certain medicines for relief, take them on time.
- Find ways to relax your muscles and avoid stressing out. Take out enough time to mediate and rest.