

Mountain Bike

Tips for Upper- and Lower-Limb Amputees

Mountain biking is a sport that consists of riding specially adapted bicycles off-road, often over rough terrain. Mountain bikes share similarities with other bikes, but incorporate features designed to enhance durability and performance.

This sport requires endurance, core strength and balance, bike-handling skills and self-reliance. The following tips are for bikers of all levels of ability, as well as for upper-limb and above-knee amputees.

General Tips

The most fundamental advice? Just get out and ride. Once you have made your bike and/or prosthetic modification, you'll find that your riding technique is the same as or similar to an able-bodied rider. Basically, most of your moves and timing for getting up, down, over and around obstacles are the same as any typical rider.

If you're a beginner, contact your local bike shops. They can help you make any necessary bike modifications and inform you about local bike clubs and group rides. You may want to look into lessons or just buddy up with other mountain bikers.

The best actual riding tip, regardless of your physical disposition or ability, is: "Mo" (momentum) is your friend. A rolling bike is easier to control and keep upright than a bike that's standing still. But don't confuse momentum with speed – these are two different things.

Too much speed will get you into as much trouble as a lack of momentum. Using too much brake or going too slow in certain situations can cause your bike to hang up or slide out. By letting your bike roll through or over obstacles, you're allowing the bike to do what it is designed to do.

Upper-Limb Amputees

- Invest in fully hydraulic disc brakes. They're worth the extra money.
- If you're a beginner, start with platform pedals. It's one less thing to worry about releasing from in case of a crash.
- Drop the saddle on sustained descents; this makes it easier to shift your weight around.
- If you're an above-elbow amputee, try angling your forearm more outboard; it makes it easier to turn to that side.
- Use the widest riser bar you can find; it will provide better steering control and handling because you have more leverage.
- Elbow angle is very dependent on the terrain. If you're doing mainly downhill, consider setting the elbow in a more extended position, and suffer a little more on the climb.
- Use a bigger front tire; the weight penalty is worth it. This will beef up the whole front end of the bike, and allow you to roll over obstacles more easily.

Riding

>> For more tips and information,
visit mtb-amputee.com.



Above-Knee Amputees

- Fit is critical. If investing in a new or used bike, take your time to find the one that's right for you.
- Starting with seat height and position, ride with a slightly lower-than-normal seat height to allow you to put your foot on the ground while your bike is in the upright position. Although some AK amputees prefer to slightly angle their seats toward their prosthetic leg, others prefer riding with the nose of the saddle pointing straight.
- When mounting or dismounting, lean the bike on an angle toward your good leg, making it easier to swing your prosthetic leg over the rear tire. Don't be too proud to use trees or other objects to help you get started.
- When training, try to push hard with your sound leg; otherwise, you will overload your other leg and cramps will come within hours. Practice getting your real foot/pedal in the 11:00 trigger position to be able to apply torque when needed.
- Rhythm is key; use your iPod!
- For beginners, use a toe clip for your prosthetic leg (set the strap as snug as possible to hold your foot in place) with a flat, clipless pedal for your good leg. The benefits of using a clipless pedal along with the toe clip are more power and pedaling efficiency.
- If you're going to be riding for more than an hour, apply Certain Dri deodorant to your residual limb; it will stop perspiration and allow better grip/suspension to the leg.
- If possible, use a separate socket for riding. It should be cut down 2 inches to prevent abrasion.
- Wear a knee warmer/converter over your knee and prosthetic leg; this will prevent mud, sand and pebbles from slipping into your socket. 🌀