

Take 10 Steps if a Worker's Limb Is Amputated on the Job



One of the most horrifying workplace injuries is the amputation of a finger, hand, foot, etc., which can occur if a worker's hair, clothing or PPE gets caught in machinery.

How you respond to an amputation may determine whether doctors will be able to reattach the amputated limb and even whether the injured worker will survive. That's because complications can occur when a body part is amputated, including extensive bleeding, shock and infection.

To ensure the best possible outcome when a worker's limb has been amputated, always immediately call for medical assistance. Then ensure that first aiders and co-workers take the following steps while waiting for help to arrive:

1. Check the worker's airway (open it if necessary); check breathing and circulation. If necessary, begin rescue breathing, CPR or bleeding control.
2. Try to calm and reassure the worker as much as possible. Amputation is painful and very frightening.
3. Control bleeding by applying direct pressure to the wound. Raise the injured area. If bleeding continues, recheck the source of the bleeding and reapply direct pressure, with help from someone who isn't tired. If the person has life-threatening bleeding, a tight bandage or tourniquet will be easier to use than direct pressure on the wound. But using a tight bandage for a long time may do more harm than good.
4. Save *any* severed body parts and make sure they stay with the person. If possible, remove any dirty material that can contaminate the wound and gently rinse the body part if the cut end is dirty.
5. Wrap the severed part in a clean, damp cloth, place it in a sealed plastic bag and place the bag in an ice water bath.
6. If cold water isn't available, keep the part away from heat as much as possible. Save it for the medical team or take it to the hospital. Cooling

the severed part will keep it safe for reattachment for about 18 hours. Without cooling, it will only remain safe for about 4 to 6 hours.

7. Keep the person warm.
8. Take steps to prevent shock. Lay the worker flat, raise his feet about 12 inches and cover him with a coat or blanket. But don't place the worker in this position if a head, neck, back or leg injury is suspected or if it makes him uncomfortable.
9. Once the bleeding is under control, check the worker for other signs of injury that require emergency treatment. Treat fractures, additional cuts and other injuries appropriately.
10. Stay with the worker until medical help arrives.

There are also certain things you should NOT do:

- Do NOT forget that saving the worker's life is more important than saving a body part.
- Do NOT overlook other, less obvious, injuries.
- Do NOT attempt to push any body part back into place.
- Do NOT directly put the body part in water without using a plastic bag.
- Do NOT put the severed part directly on ice and do NOT use dry ice because it will cause frostbite and injury to the part.
- Do NOT decide that a body part is too small to save.
- Do NOT use a tourniquet, unless the bleeding is life threatening, as the entire limb may be harmed.
- Do NOT raise false hopes of reattachment.

Bottom line: The long-term outcome for an amputee depends on early emergency and critical care management.

To prevent amputations from occurring in the first place, make sure that you:

- Choose appropriate guards
- Bar workers from removing machine guards
- Discipline workers who violate a no jewellery policy.