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# The Phantoms



Beating the Phantoms

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[Phantom Pain without Medication](#)  
[Other forms of Phantom Pain Relief](#)

Despite its "ghostly" connotation, phantom sensation is most certainly a realistic, tangible event experienced by millions of amputees world wide.

Whilst the debate over [what causes phantom pain](#) continue, the debate often overshadows the bottom line: Amputees are in pain because of it.

Phantom sensation is usually experienced by most amputees at one time or another. Some of us are blessed with very little exposure to the "unpleasantries" of phantom sensation, some experience severe pain on a daily basis.

Phantom sensation is not just the feeling of having a limb when no limb is present (which usually goes away). It is a term used for any sensation or pain originating from a residual (stump) limb.

Phantom sensation can range from tingling sensations to severe sharp, stabbing pain that can only be controlled via professional pain management.

Here are some tips on dealing with phantom sensation.

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## Phantom Pain Relief Without Medication

(Condensed from The Christian Science Monitor)

Listed below are ways that members of Lower Extremity Amputees providing Support (LEAPS) of Kansas have found helpful in relieving phantom pain.

These methods don't always work, of course, and what works for one

person may not work for another. Remember, check with your doctor if you have any questions before trying these methods.

1. 1. Wrap your stump in a warm, soft fabric, such as a towel. The warmth will sometimes increase circulation. Poor circulation is thought to be one cause of phantom pain.
2. 2. Mentally exercise the limb that is not there in the area that is painful.
3. 3. Mentally relax the missing limb and your stump.
4. 4. Do some mild overall exercise to increase circulation.
5. 5. Exercise the stump.
6. 6. Tighten the muscles in the stump, then release them slowly.
7. 7. Put ace wrap or shrinker sock on. If you have your prosthesis, put it on and take a short walk.
8. 8. If you have pain with the prosthesis on, take it and the prosthetic sock off and put it back on after a few minutes. Sometimes the stump is being pinched and changing the way it is on will relieve the pressure on that nerve.
9. 9. Change positions. If you are sitting, move around in your chair, or stand up to let the blood get down into your stump.
10. 10. Soak in a warm bath or use a shower message or whirlpool on your stump. A hot tub is reported to do wonders.
11. 11. Massage your stump with your hands or better yet have someone else message it while you try to relax your entire body.
12. 12. Keep a diary of when pain is most severe. This can help you and your doctor identify recurring causes.
13. 13. Wrap stump in a heating pad.

Some people have found help through self-hypnosis, biofeedback and chiropractic. If you have not found relief through any home remedies and the pain is not being controlled through normal medication, a pain center should be considered.

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## Other methods of dealing with Phantom Sensation

*by Claude Pomerol*  
*(former World Record Holder (88-95) Womens BK 100 meter sprint)*

In 1964, at the age of 16, I was the youngest member ever on the French Olympic track team. All my life I had loved to run, play games, chase friends and fly like the wind. To train, secretly at night, I had to jump the wall that separated the Catholic girl's boarding school from the boy's school

next door. They had the only track!

The trial to qualify for the team were held in Paris. When I lined up to run, I didn't even have the appropriate spikes. A kind runner lent me her spare pair. Coaches and of officials were wondering who this scrawny kid was. They found out 100 meters later. I was not only the scrawniest, I was the fastest! I was going to the Olympics Games in Tokyo.

On a beautiful Sunday, two weeks before leaving for the Games, I asked my father to take me for a drive to enjoy the freedom and excitement I felt because my dream had come true. It was not to be. A drunk driver suddenly came around a corner, head on. When I woke from a coma three months later I learned I might never walk again. And that my father had been killed.

I did learn to walk again with the aid of crutches then a cane. After graduating from La Sorbonne, I came to Canada, married and had two children.

In 1985 cancer overtook my left leg. Several amputations followed starting at the ankle and ending just below the knee. It was at the time Steve Fonyo was running across Canada. He inspired me, as had earlier another young amputee I had met, Terry Fox, and then later another found another friend in Rick Hansen. All three inspired me to pursue my ill-fated running career interrupted twenty-one years before.

Three months after the last operation I challenged the Mayor of Nanaimo, British Columbia, where I was living at the time, to a marathon run to raise money for cancer research. Together we raised \$20,000. To top it all I ran the final miles into Victoria with Steve Fonyo.

For me the rest is history. Three years of intensive training with able-bodied athletes in Calgary and world class competition culminated in a Gold and silver medal in the 100 and 200 meter sprints at the 1988 Paralympics in Seoul, Korea. From 1988 to 1995 I held the world record in the 100 meter event and still have the world record in the 200 meter event. My 1964 dream had finally come true!

But this type of intensive training. (read wear-and-tear on my stump and body), did not come without a price. A price in pain.

After Seoul it was time to get on with making a living as a motivational speaker and as I was to learn, living in pain. When you train at a high level you expect some aches and pains, but through repetition you don't notice that much, or ignore the pain for the ultimate goal. Not so in daily living.

I began to experience phantom limb pain much more frequently than before.

My usual remedy was to transfer the pain to the other foot by applying equal or more pain by manually squeezing the other foot until relief came. This would work at home, but imagine me taking off my shoe and squeezing my foot in public

One day in early 1994 on a visit to my prosthetist, Tony van der Waarde, I was venting my frustrations on not being able to deal more effectively with the phantom pain better and earlier. He told me about a new alternative pain relief system called Farabloc.

Tony had a sample of Farabloc which looks and feels like an ordinary piece of linen but contains extremely thin steel fibres. The sample he gave me was about the size of a large handkerchief. I took it home and upon my first hint of phantom pain I wrapped it around my stump. Lo and behold the pain was caught in the bud! I didn't need to squeeze and I didn't have to take a pain-killer pill!

Shortly after that I met the inventor of Farabloc, Frieder- Kempe. He explained to me how Farabloc through its shielding effect protects damaged nerve endings. It stimulates blood circulation and aids muscle relaxation and can be applied for muscle strain and some arthritic pains. A seamless stump sock of Farabloc was made for me so I could wear it full time or whenever an attack of phantom pain announced itself.

Interestingly, I've noticed that since I received the sock, even though I don't wear it all the time, the frequency of phantom pain has diminished.

Recently I was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia, an incurable disease that causes severe pain in the joints plus daily exhaustion. This unfortunate development has been attributed to the strain of extreme over exertion in my training for the sprint events. Some other complications have also contributed to the onset of Fibromyalgia.

Medication has been prescribed. To add to that, I'll be using a larger blanket of Farabloc on my shoulders and back, where most of the pain is centred.

I'll be the first to let you know the results!

*Claude Pomerol*  
*Motivational Speaker*  
*Gold and Silver Medal Winner*  
*1988 Seoul Paralympics*

**For more information on [Farabloc please visit their WEB Site](#)**

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