

Mirror Therapy Instructions

Foot and Leg (Lower Limb) for Phantom Limb Pain

What is Mirror Therapy?

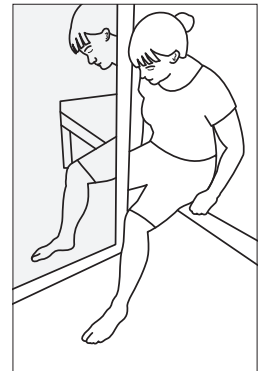
Mirror Therapy is a technique used for the treatment of phantom limb pain and other painful conditions. During Mirror Therapy, you watch a reflection of your intact limb in a mirror, which creates the visual illusion that both limbs are moving together. During Mirror Therapy, your brain 'sees' the two limbs moving together and this can reduce phantom limb pain (PLP).

How will I benefit from these exercises?

Many amputees experience a reduction or even elimination of phantom limb pain using Mirror Therapy. Successful outcomes require commitment to practice and active participation.

Mirror Therapy set up (equipment)

Use a mirror of adequate size to view the intact limb and its mirror image. A plexiglass mirror (not glass) is recommended to ensure no risk of injury.



How to do the exercises

Getting started

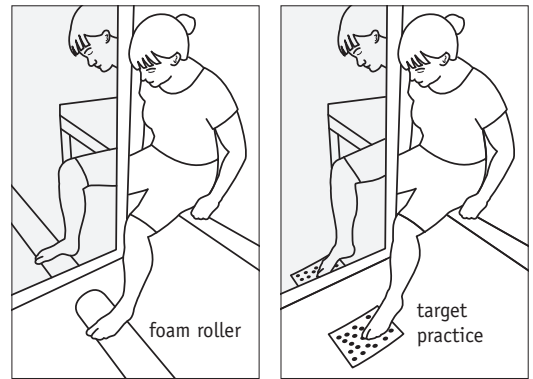
1. Sit comfortably in a quiet area.
2. Remove any jewellery and cover any tattoos or distinguishing marks on your intact limb as this is the limb you will see reflected in the mirror. Remove your prosthesis from your amputated limb.
3. Position the mirror in front of you, perpendicular to your body. The mirror should be facing the intact limb, as in the picture.
4. When you look down, you should see your intact limb and its mirror image. The amputated limb should be hidden behind the mirror. Start by simply looking at the "two limbs".
5. Ensure the mirror provides a clear image without any distortion. A distortion may affect the illusion that you are 'seeing' your amputated limb or may increase your phantom limb pain.
6. Your therapist will tailor the exercises for you. A general outline is provided below.

Doing the exercises

1. Perform all exercises below pain threshold.
2. Begin with small, slow movements. Start by moving your foot up and down. You should see the intact foot and its mirror image moving together. Focus on the mirror image during movements. Imagine your amputated limb actually doing what you see in the mirror. The illusion is that it should 'feel' like both limbs are moving together.
3. Repeat _____ times
4. Progress to larger, slow movements. Begin to add in movements in other directions, such as up/down, left/right, or ankle circles. Begin to add in movements at the other joints, such as toes, knee, or hip.



5. Add in the use of objects during the movements. For example, the foam roller (picture to right, tracing a simple pattern, or target-practice (picture to right).
6. You and your therapist may decide to add in sensory exercises. For example, a soft brush or mild heat could be added to your pain-free area. If comfortable, you could increase to rougher objects or move into your painful areas.
7. You can also adjust the context while doing the exercises. For example, singing a song or thinking of an emotional situation while doing your exercises.
8. Remember that the goal is to continuously watch the image in the mirror and imagine that both limbs are slowly moving together. Over time you will have less pain and be able to do more challenging exercises.



Review your exercises with your therapist. Ensure the exercises are being done correctly and ask any questions.

Mental Practice

Motor and sensory exercises using the mirror can be complemented by Mental Practice. Mental Practice is when a person mentally rehearses movement (the mind is working, but the body is still).

- Sit comfortably in a quiet area. Relax your breathing and your mind.
- Start with your eyes closed and muscles relaxed. Your muscles won't move during this exercise.
- Begin by imagining 'feeling' both limbs. Start to imagine slowly moving both limbs together.

Progress to larger, slow movements. Begin to add in movements in other directions.

- Repeat _____ times
- You can progress to activities such as walking in grass, on a sandy beach, or up stairs.
- You can do this exercise once per day to enhance your Mirror Therapy session for _____ minutes.

When to stop Mirror Therapy?

Side effects are not common. However, if you experience any of the following symptoms discontinue the exercises and speak to your therapist:

- Increase in phantom limb pain, phantom sensations, feelings of grief or confusion, dizziness, sweating, or sensory changes.

How often do I need to practice Mirror Therapy?

Unless otherwise specified by your therapist, perform the exercises:

- Up to 30 min per day (one long session or two 10–15 minute sessions)
- 5 days per week
- For 4–6 weeks

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