

Driving and Amputation

ADED – The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists

After a limb amputation, a person is sometimes unable to drive an automobile in the normal manner. There are, however, several types of adaptive devices that can allow an individual with an amputation to safely resume driving. The site of amputation(s) will determine the degree of difficulty an amputee will have with driving a standard equipped vehicle. In most cases, the adapted equipment will involve compensation for the inability to reach and operate primary and secondary driving controls. For example, amputations may occur at:

Right leg:

- Left foot gas pedal or hand controls
- Automatic transmission
- Power braking

Both legs:

- Hand controls for brake and accelerator
- Spinner knob
- Automatic transmission
- Emergency brake extension
- Chest strap

Either arm:

- Automatic transmission
- Steering device
- Reduced effort steering
- Modified gear shifter
- Modified secondary controls (turn signals, dimmers)

Triple or quadruple limbs:

- Additional modifications can be made to the car or van
- Reduced effort steering system
- Servo brake and accelerator control
- Joystick driving systems



Adaptive equipment and vehicle modifications are available for some vehicles, although all vehicles are not suitable for modifications. A driver rehabilitation specialist can assist in making the correct vehicle choice, and then provide a comprehensive evaluation to determine a person’s ability to drive. Adequate training is required for any adaptive equipment for a successful outcome.

