

Being Prepared

Living with your physical disability is a lifelong journey, with highs and lows. Everybody feels the impacts of ageing as they get older.

While most people begin to feel the impacts of ageing in their 60s, people with a physical disability often begin to feel tired and sore earlier and may start to slow down much earlier in life, some as early as their 30s.

Many people living with a physical disability comment that they wish they had known what was going to happen and wanted more information to help them prepare.

Paying attention to your body and what you need to do can help you as you get older.

It is never too late to pay attention to what you need and take action. Things take time, thinking about things early means plenty of time to plan, think and do what you want to do.

For people with a physical disability, early planning can be particularly important because some treatment options – particularly surgical ones – are best addressed and actioned before the body stops growing. The human body changes rapidly during the teen years and some of these

changes can cause injury, pain or problems later in life. Regular monitoring will help you pick up problems early.

In childhood, the same child health team may look after you for many years. They know you very well. Your parents have looked after all your decisions and you often do not know what has been discussed over your life.

In adulthood, you receive services from the adult health system. You may see many different specialists and teams in the adult health system, sometimes at different hospitals and community settings. If you have the ability to, you can become an expert in your own health and can make the decisions about what will happen.

Steps to managing life with a disability

- Around the age of 14, people with physical disabilities and their parents should begin discussions about long-term planning with their paediatrician, GP and therapy team.



- Long-term plans should be reviewed and updated every year in consultation with your network and team.
- A physiotherapy review should take place annually. Depending on your abilities and needs, other yearly reviews may be required with health professionals including occupational therapists, speech therapists, dietitians, social workers and psychologists.

Visit futurethinking.abilitycentre.com.au for more information.