

**If She Can Do It, You Can Do It: One Woman's Story About Being an Amputee Who Trains With Weights**

*Translated into plain language by Helen Osborne of [Health Literacy Consulting](#)  
Original article by Scott McNutt*

Christie Hagedorn has a message for anyone, amputee or not, who thinks training with weights is an impossible goal: If she can do it, you can too!

Christie Hagedorn lost her left leg below the knee in a motorcycle accident more than twenty years ago. She spent months in the hospital and later went home on crutches. For the next 11 years, she always used crutches to offset the pain of pressure sores. Although Hagedorn tried walking without crutches, her attempts never lasted long. “When you bear down on those sores so much, you say okay, I got to use the crutches. I would say 99 percent of the time I had them.”



Hagedorn not only wanted to get rid of the crutches but also start training with weights again (her hobby before the accident). But many health providers said this

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was not likely to happen. “It was always no, no, no, no,” Hagedorn says. She grew to believe there was little she could do to change the situation. This changed for the better when Hagedorn started with a new physical therapist who tested her walking skills. “She told me she wanted me to walk for her. So I walked down. I walked back. She tested my hip flexor and my thigh and my hamstrings.” The therapist found that Hagedorn had no strength in her left leg and put her on a weight (strength) training program.

This program started with a machine to exercise Hagedorn’s hips. In just two weeks, she regained 35 degrees of movement in her left knee and got rid of her crutches. Two weeks later, she no longer had painful sores. Hagedorn was thrilled with these quick results. “I don’t know if it was just because the machine was working the muscles it was supposed to, but it was just great. All I know is I was just shocked that all this time, all these surgeries I went through, they never worked. I can’t even begin to explain it.”

From this point on, Hagedorn has been training with weights. She is now so strong that she started roller-skating again, just like she did as a child. “My four kids went



and got me some rollerblades, and they helped me learn how to rollerblade out at the park. And it was like the best thing I had ever experienced.”

Hagedorn is such a fan of weight training that she now teaches others. She is a personal trainer at her local

YMCA – helping others learn about weight training. Her goal is to get amputees into the weight room and then “teach them everything about a total body work over, experience it, enjoy it, and have them teach other amputees too, so that it just keeps going on,” she says.

Hagedorn suggests some ways that amputees can maintain their health:

- **Check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program.** Have someone assist you when you first train with weights or do other types of exercise. Over time, most people are able to do these exercises on their own.
- **Stay in good heart (cardiovascular) conditioning.** Lower-extremity amputees need this because of extra demands on their body when walking.

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- **Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water.** Hagedorn says that eating foods high in sodium (salt) can cause problems with prostheses. Problems are made worse when people do not drink enough water. Hagedorn says that when she eats too much pizza that she has trouble with her prosthetic leg. “It makes it swell and then it doesn’t fit properly. And if your leg is off, your back is off, everything is off.”
  - **Know you can do it.** Hagedorn hopes to lead other amputees to a recovery as remarkable as her own. This advice is for people of all ages who may feel like they just can’t do it. “If someone doesn’t feel like they can change, or has thought about it and just given up, I hope they’ll read this and say, ‘She did it. That could be me too. If she can do it, I can do it.’”

You can learn more about training with weights and other types of exercise by reading: "Keep Moving...Exercises for Lower-Extremity Amputees," from the 2001 edition of *First Step - A Guide for Adapting to Limb Loss*, [www.amputee-coalition.org/first\\_step/firststepv2\\_s3a03.html](http://www.amputee-coalition.org/first_step/firststepv2_s3a03.html)

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Always check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program. Have someone assist you when you first get started. Over time, most people can do these exercises on their own.

*Translated from **If She Can Do It, You can Do It Amputee Wants Others to Take Her Example to the Weight Room***