Information for patients

Managing With One Hand

The Sheffield Hand Centre
Activities of Daily Living for people following surgery or an injury to hand or wrist

How to do tasks using one hand

Normal circumstances usually see us holding or grasping objects with one hand - the non-dominant - whilst the activity is carried out by the other - dominant hand. Therefore, most activities can be carried out using one hand if suitable stabilisation of the object is available.

There are many ways of doing this, for example, holding the object against your body, using a vice, putting a weight on top of the object, using non-slip materials, putting the object between your knees, under your foot etc.

Section 1 Personal Hygiene

Washing/Bathing/Showering

- Use a soap dispenser if you find a tablet soap difficult.
- Use a flannel mitt with soap placed inside.
- To wring a flannel out, wrap it round the stem of the tap and twist.
- A sponge lathers easier than a flannel and is easy to squeeze out after use.
- If balance is a problem, use a non slip mat and/or a shower seat.
Teeth

• Put toothbrush on wash-basin; put required amount of toothpaste on to the bristles (the cap can usually easily be unscrewed or flipped with one hand).

• Use a toothbrush dispenser either in your unaffected hand or wall mounted.

• For dentures, soak in a proprietary cleaner. To clean with a brush, have separate suction nail brush for this purpose. Put toothpaste on the brush and rub denture over the brush to clean.

Hair care

• To avoid using too much shampoo and having difficulty both managing the bottle and rinsing out the excessive lather, measure the required amount into an egg cup or suitable container before commencing.

• Use a hair brush or comb to help work shampoo or conditioner through the hair

Creams/Lotions

• For hand lotion, put a small amount on your thigh (if circumstances permit!) and rub your hand over the cream.

Shaving

• Use electric razor

• Use foam/gel as an alternative to a brush and bowl if wet shaving.
Section 2 Dressing

• Place your affected arm into the garment first and take out last.

• If sufficient width, leave shirt/blouse cuffs fastened all the time.

• On trousers/skirts fasten the top button first; it is then easier to pull up the zip.

• For casual wear, track suits - particularly track suit trousers - are ideal.

• Bras are easier to put on if fastened first at the front or are front fastening by design.

• Shoe laces can be done one-handed (instructions are included at the back of this booklet).

• To tie a neck-tie, secure the narrow end firmly (for example, in a drawer of a suitable height). This will provide the necessary tension.

• Other methods include leaving the tie tied after removing so that it can be slipped over the head and adjusted.

Section 3 Household activities

Food preparation

Equipment which could be of help includes a spike board, bread buttering board (lipped on two sides), double bladed vegetable peeler, suction mixing bowl, hand held electric can opener, jar opener, pastry blender, food processor, draining sieve for vegetables (this lifts straight out of the water in the pan, draining the vegetables at the same time).
Washing up

• Use a dishwasher

• Soak dishes in hot water as soon after use as possible to make cleaning easier.

• To wring out a dish cloth, place round the stem of the tap and twist.

Drying dishes

• Place the tea towel on a flat surface; place the item to be dried on the tea towel and wrap the towel round. Alternatively, leave to dry in a dish rack, on the draining board.

Hanging out the washing

• Have the clothes line lower than previously.

• Keep clothes pegs in an easily accessible container.

• Place wet clothes halfway over the line - particularly larger, heavier items. This is easier than trying to peg the hems.

Folding laundry

• Use a table as this will take the weight. Items can be smoothed out and folded more easily if on a flat surface.

Cleaning

• Where possible, have duplicate cleaning materials upstairs and down. This reduces the amount of carrying required. Encourage all family members to clean up after themselves where applicable, leaving a minimum amount of general cleaning being necessary.
Putting on a duvet cover

• Spread the cover out on the bed; place the duvet on the bed, folding into 1/3rds lengthways.

• Feed into the cover.

• Open out the duvet, when reaching the corners place a spring clothes peg at the top corners to secure whilst arranging the remaining material.

Putting on a pillow case

• When removing for washing, leave inside out.

• When putting back on the pillow, put your hand inside the case and clip on a spring clothes peg attaching the pillow case corner to the pillow.

• Repeat for the other corner.

• Pull the pillow case over the pillow and shake after removing the pegs.

Both will require practice; be prepared to allow yourself time.

Carrying shopping

• Use a large shoulder bag placed diagonally across your upper body to distribute the weight of the contents evenly. This also allows your unaffected side to remain free to manage doors, money etc.

Managing money

• Use a pocket in clothing on the unaffected side.
**Conclusion**

Do not expect to be able to carry out every activity at the same level as previously - this would be unrealistic. Allow yourself enough time - you will inevitably require longer to do the task, particularly in the early days following your injury or operation.
Tying Shoelaces One Handed

To Lace

1. Tie a knot on one end of the lace

2. Thread through (upwards) eyelet number 1

3. Thread down number 2, up 3 and so on to no. 7

4. Thread lace down eyelet 8 and bring back up through eyelet 2

To Fasten

1. Tighten lace from top of shoe, downwards towards the toe.

2. Pull the loose end of lace tightly at eyelet number 2.

3. Make a loop on the loose end. Pass loop number 1 under the lace between eyelets 1-2. Do not tighten.
4. Pass the loop through the second loop which has now been formed (2).

5. Tighten this half bow towards eyelet number 2, to secure the lace.

To Unfasten

1. Undo the half bow by pulling the loose end.

2. Loosen the lace, starting from the toe (lace 7-8), working upwards to lace 1-2.

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