One handed activities
One handed activities
Introduction

- The purpose of this leaflet is to provide practical advice to anyone who is only able to use one arm or hand following an injury e.g. fracture or amputation, or an illness e.g. a stroke.

- It includes useful tips on how to manage everyday activities independently using one arm or hand.

- This leaflet has been developed by people who are one handed in conjunction with Occupational Therapists.

- The layout is designed so that you can use it either as a reference, to look up specific issues as they occur, or read through it to give you more general ideas.

Many of the daily tasks we carry out involve using two hands. This is possibly because our environment has been designed by two-handed people for two-handed people. However, if you are only able to use one hand, there are ways to modify how you approach a task to ensure it can be completed independently.

You will prefer some techniques over others and some you will modify to suit your own individual needs; after all a lot of the following methods are modifications found by other people. There is nothing wrong with this unless it involves any risk to yourself or others.

If the process of completing a task is going to involve danger or too much effort there is nothing wrong with letting someone else do it if this is possible.
The way people adapt to managing activities using one hand involves the following three concepts.

**Body Position**
By organising yourself and using your body in the most efficient way, you can make difficult tasks easier. This can include deciding where to stand or sit and what area of your body you need to use to support an object. Becoming used to using your body in different ways is the most important principle as you always have your body with you whereas you may have left a tool or gadget elsewhere!!

**Methods**
By learning and experimenting with different ways of doing things you will find your own way of managing independently. What works for one person may not work for another so it is important to experiment with different ways of doing activities. When you are doing this make sure that you do not put yourself in danger.

**Equipment**
By using equipment differently and using special equipment, life can be made easier. Remember that you have to take the equipment with you!! Advice on special equipment can be provided by your Occupational Therapist. Depending on your need, some equipment can be provided through Social Services and other pieces can be purchased from specialist shops or catalogues (see list at the back of the leaflet).
Adaptations
Some adaptations are better than others and it’s an individual thing. Therefore, always try before you buy (SYCIL – see page 13 – is a good resource to try).

Assistance
People will often offer assistance without being asked for it, especially if you are struggling. Try not to get too upset as they are generally offering with the best intentions.

Armpits
A long handled brush or sponge will allow you to wash under the armpit you cannot reach, unless you are double jointed of course!

Bathing
There are a number of pieces of equipment available; again, SYCIL (see page 13) is a good resource to try these, or discuss with your occupational therapist.

Bra
Use a sports type bra that you pull on over your head.

Blue Tack
Can be used to hold nails in position before using the hammer. It can also be used for a number of other holding operations e.g. paper, ruler.
Cartons
Try and use cartons that have the plastic insert in them rather than the type that you have to tear off; if not use scissors to cut the corner off.

Chopping
If you need to chop vegetables or other food, use a spike board. The vegetables are pushed onto the spikes which hold them in place to enable you to chop them up. (See back of book for suppliers.)

Cutlery
Cutlery which is designed to be a combined fork and knife is available and makes life a lot easier. (See back of book for suppliers.)

Dressing (top half)
Always put your weaker arm in first and make sure that the clothing is pushed up past the elbow. Use clothes with buttons, press studs, elastic or Velcro. Avoid zips or keep them done up.

Drying yourself
It is easier if you sit down to dry. Use the toilet or a stool. Alternatively, you can use a towelling dressing gown instead.

Dusting
Use pockets to store polish and dusters.

Duvet Covers
To put a duvet cover on, first lay the cover out on the bed. Put the duvet into one corner and secure on the outside with a peg or two. Put the duvet into the other corner and secure with a peg. Secure the duvet along the top of the cover with pegs. Shake the cover down and do up. Or climb inside and feed top corners in first.
Earrings
Avoid using stud earrings. Use dangly earrings that just push through your ears or clip on types.

Eating out
Order food that doesn’t need cutting up or ask the kitchen staff in restaurants to cut up food for you prior to bringing it out. This saves embarrassment at the table. Always ask for a steak knife for any meat.

Feet
If you also have a weak leg, cross this leg over the stronger leg and wash feet. You can also use a bath brush or long handled sponge.

Feminine hygiene
It may be easier to use sanitary pads rather than tampons. Take the tape off using your teeth, put the pad onto a hard surface and press your pants onto it. Baby wipes in the flat packets are easy to use to freshen up with.

Gardening
Adapted tools are available for use with one hand.
Hair
To wash hair, squeeze the shampoo onto your dry hair whilst looking in the mirror before you get into the bath or shower. If you have problems with balance, wash your hair last as it reduces the slippiness of the floor of the bath or shower.

Hair - to dry hair
Use a hairdryer with a brush attached to it. It is also easier to manage short hairstyles.

Handbags
Use handbags with long straps which you can put across your body. If the zip on a handbag has a large fob use your teeth to help do it up.

Hanging clothes up
Lay clothes out on your bed to make it easier to put coat hangers in.

Ironing
Only iron essential items. A cordless iron will be easier to use. If you have problems with mobility it is easier to sit down to iron or use a perching stool (see back for details).

Jars
To open screw top jars put them between your legs whilst sitting down and unscrew using your unaffected arm. Alternatively there are pieces of equipment designed for use with one hand. Run metal lids under hot water first.
Kettle
One cup hot drink machine or a breville hot cup.

Laundry
If possible use an automatic washing machine and tumble dryer. Fold laundry on a large flat surface such as a table.

Microwave
Using a microwave is a lot easier and safer than the oven. For a quick meal use a ready meal available from supermarkets.

Milk
Use milk in bottles or if you use cartons use the screw top variety. If the container is large decant the milk into a jug for daily use.

Money
Sort money out on a table or surface instead of inside a purse.
Nails - (finger)
To file the nails on your unaffected hand put a piece of non-slip matting on your knee, put an emery board on top of it and then push your nails backwards and forwards.

Necklace
Loop the necklace around your neck and trap in the side of your neck. You can then fasten it.

Non-slip mats
These are excellent for holding anything in place while you use it e.g. plates, bowls, cups etc.

Oranges
It is easier to cut them into quarters (using a spike-board) than trying to peel them with one hand.

Pans
You can buy pan handle holders that stick to your cooker and stop the pan spinning one way when you stir it.

Paperclips
Paperclips are hard to use one handed as they tend to separate and you lose the top or bottom page. A stapler is much easier to use.

Pockets
Pockets are excellent when you only have one hand to use. Wear clothing with pockets in or wear an overall to enable you to have quick access to items you are using.

Purses
Use purses with clasps or Velcro to make them easier to open and close.
Quit
Know when to admit defeat. If something is too difficult and the effort required too great, let someone else do it if possible.

Rings
To take off rings on your unaffected hand use the straight edge of a table or a wheelchair to push them off and then use the other fingers to get them over the knuckle. Use hand soap or fairy liquid on fingers to loosen.

Sheets
It is easier to use fitted sheets. When putting them on put one corner of the mattress in first and then sit on the sheet whilst stretching it over to the other corner of the bed. Repeat for all corners.

Shoes
Use shoes or trainers that have Velcro fastenings or buckle fastening shoes which fasten at the side. Elastic shoelaces can also be used to change lace up shoes into slip-ons.

Shopping
Try to shop at quieter times, especially if you have to use a wheelchair.

Showering
If you are using a shower seat put a towel on the seat to stop yourself slipping on it.

(cont...)
Spreading
Use a spreading board (available from shops - see list at back) to support the bread when spreading onto toast or making sandwiches. Use spreadable butter or margarine.

Stockings
When putting your white stockings (TED stockings) on make sure you have dry legs and use talcum powder if you can. There is also a piece of equipment available to assist putting them on that can be supplied by an orthotist (referral through your GP).

Tins
To take the lids off tins use a one-handed electric can opener (available from shops). Make sure that it has a magnet to hold the tin lid in place after opening.

Toothbrush
To put the toothpaste onto the brush put the toothbrush onto a ledge or the sink, squeeze the paste out and then onto the brush or hold the handle end of the brush in your mouth then apply the paste.

Toothpaste
Use toothpaste with a flip top or a screw top and put it between your knees to open.

Trousers
Use elasticated waist trousers or if you can’t, make sure that you fasten the button first before pulling the zip up.
Utensils
There are a number of innovative utensils on the market that will make life easier (see useful contacts section).

Vehicles
Can be adapted for people with one hand to drive. MAVIS (see useful contacts) is an excellent organisation that advises on car adaptations and whether a driving examination is necessary.

Walking stick
When you are doing something and need to put your walking stick somewhere. You can temporarily hook it in front of clothing.

Wallets
Use wallets with Velcro fastening to make them easier to open and close.

Washing unaffected arm
Put the soap or a sponge between your knees and rub your arm up and down on it. For upper arm, trap sponge between shower wall or side of bath and move your body.

Washing up
Use a cloth, sponge or a brush when washing up. To dry pots sit down and put a tea towel on your knees and support things between your legs whilst drying them with your unaffected hand. Or, easier still, let pots air dry in a dish rack.

Watch
Use an expander strap, pin on watch or a watch with an elasticated strap.
Many people worry that their relationships with present or future partners will be affected. Your GP can advise on other services available.

**Yale locks**
It is easier to use a mortise lock, because you don’t have to hold the lock open with one hand whilst using the other hand for the door handle.

**Zips**
If you can, avoid zips; if you can’t avoid them, try and keep them done up, get ones with larger tabs or use a key ring fitted into the tab.
Useful contacts

The following contacts are not an exhaustive list and most of the services or products are not linked to the NHS. Prior to using any equipment or services it is advisable to seek independent advice.

Advice

AbilityNet (information and advice on technology) ................................................... 0800 269545
Age UK .......................................................... 0800 1698787
BT (age and disability unit) ........................................... 0800 243123
DIAL Doncaster ............................................. 01302 327800
Disabled Drivers Association .................. 0870 7703333
MAAF (Midland Amputees Association and friends) ........................................... 01246 828285
MAVIS (Mobility Advice and Vehicle Information Service) ...................................... 01344 661000
NHS Direct .......................................................... 0845 46 47
REACH (society for children with upper limb deficiencies) ........................................... 0845 1306225
REMAP (one off equipment that is not commercially available) ................................ 0845 1300456
Social Services) .......................................................... 01302 737391
SYCIL (South Yorkshire Centre for Inclusive Living) .................................................. 01302 892949
Stroke Association .................................................. 0845 3033100
Stroke Outreach Team .................................................. 01302 571130
Talking Newspaper Association ................. 01435 866102
Wheelchair Service ................................................... 01302 566701
Equipment suppliers:

Shops:
Abbey Health Care ........................................ 01302 302302
Clarke and Partners ...................................... 01302 323536
Eden Mobility ............................................... 0800 6528444
.............................................................. 01302 245082
Ledger Mobility .......................................... 01302 311119
Shop Mobility ............................................ 01302 760742

Catalogues:
British Red Cross: ...................................... 0870 739 7391
Chester Care: ............................................. 01623 722337
Homecraft: ................................................ 0844 4124330
Nottingham Rehabilitation Services .......... 0845 6197374
Occupational Therapy Stores: ............... 0845 2607061
Ways and Means: ..................................... 0845 6060911
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We are a smokefree organisation

This information is correct at the time of publishing
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