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## A patient's guide for completing activities of daily living with one hand

### **Introduction**

This booklet is designed for you to go through with your occupational therapist. An occupational therapist will discuss the activities that you would normally do in your everyday life and any concerns that you have about completing these with one hand. We will aim to help you to adapt how tasks are done so that you can successfully complete them independently.

Details of some of the more popular items of equipment that are available to purchase are included in this booklet. Adapting ways to complete tasks and/or using light weight gadgets may enable you to maximise your independence in daily activities for the long term and can also help to reduce any additional strain your functional hand has to undertake.

This booklet suggests a variety of techniques that may be of use to you, however, it may take some practise to find the most appropriate for you and not all will be suitable for everyone. Our Occupational Therapists are here to help and to answer any questions you may have regarding daily activities, so please do not hesitate to contact us. If, after reading this booklet, you have any other ideas, please let us know so that we can help someone else to be more independent.

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## PERSONAL CARE TASKS

### Washing and drying yourself:

- To wash with a soap flannel/sponge:  
Place it across the knee and rub soap on it.
- To wash using a towelling mitt:  
Rub it over soap which is held firmly by a magnetic/suction soap holder



- Use a self soaping sponge or a body puff sponge, as this will hold soap in the sponge.
- Place sponge on a flat surface, under a hand pump soap dispenser.
- Use a sensor soap dispenser; this will automatically release soap once your hand or sponge is placed underneath.



- Most areas of the body can be reached by one hand. To wash your functional arm fully, place a flannel over the side of the bath or across your knee and rub your arm on it.
- Use a long handled back brush/sponge or loofah for your back and underarm.  
Options to dry your body are:
  1. Sit and place a towel over your knee and rub your arm over it.
  2. Wear a towelling bath robe.
  3. Put a loop on the end of a towel or use a back towel which has loops at either end. Attach the loop to a hook on the wall hold the other loop in your functional hand and rub your back against it.



## Hair

- Wash hair over a bath with shower attachment from taps or use shower.
- Use flip-top bottles and tubes which are easily controlled.
- To blow dry –
  1. Place the hair drier in a wall mounted stand or table top stand and move flexible arm of stand to the right position – the hand of the functional arm is free to use the brush.



- Buy a light weight hair drier
- A hot brush or a cordless hot brush may be easier to use.
- Have hair done regularly by hairdresser and choose an easy care style.

## Hair Ties

'1-UP Hair Ties' are designed to be used by anyone with an upper limb deficiency or reduced upper limb mobility whatever the cause. The '1-UP' allows a pony tail to be completed one handed and do away with fiddly, less secure hair accessories such as claws and clips.

To find out more, visit the website: <http://www.compartmentseventy6.com>

## Shaving and hair removal

- Use an electric razor for your face.
- Use a hair removal cream for underneath your arms.
- Consider getting waxed by a professional

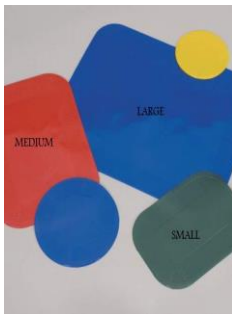


- There are various permanent or semi-permanent hair reductions available from professional beauty therapists.

**Nails** Hold the emery board by sitting on it (i.e. between your thigh and the edge of a firm seat)

- Use a suction nail brush / emery board attached to bath, basin or table
- Emery board can be held on a piece of non-slip material or secured to surface by doubled sided sticky tape or stuck down at each end with ordinary tape.
- Have your nails manicured at a local nail salon.

Non slip mats:



## Teeth

- Use toothpaste dispensers (i.e. those that you press down with your thumb to dispense) or flip lid toothpaste tubes.
- Rest the toothbrush on the sink or side, or hold between your lips whilst applying toothpaste.
- Squeeze toothpaste in your mouth and then begin to brush your teeth.
- Floss your teeth with a disposable flossing tool which has a handle.
- To clean false teeth
  1. Sit down with a flannel on your lap, place teeth in towel and grip between knees
  2. Brush using a tooth brush.
  3. Rotate the teeth till done all over.

## Toileting

- Use a toilet paper dispenser (similar to those in public toilets)





- To use a standard toilet holder
  1. Pull the desired amount, put forefinger and thumb on either side of the paper by the perforation, use your thumb to piece the perforation line and tear off paper.
- Use moist toilet tissue
- Position toilet roll holder on the side of the functional arm, if because of the design of the bathroom this is not possible you could use a floor standing toilet roll holder, but make sure it is heavy enough to stand up whilst you are pulling off the paper.

## Dressing

### *Clothing tips:*

- When putting an item of clothing on, always start by dressing the affected arm first.
- Clothes with some elasticity may make things easier e.g. Lycra, elastane, knitwear.
- Garments with deep roomy armholes, or elastic waist lines, large neck or front/side openings are easier.
- Opening to waist level to make it easier to step into garment or pull over head.
- Partly fastened garments may also provide an easier way to put them on

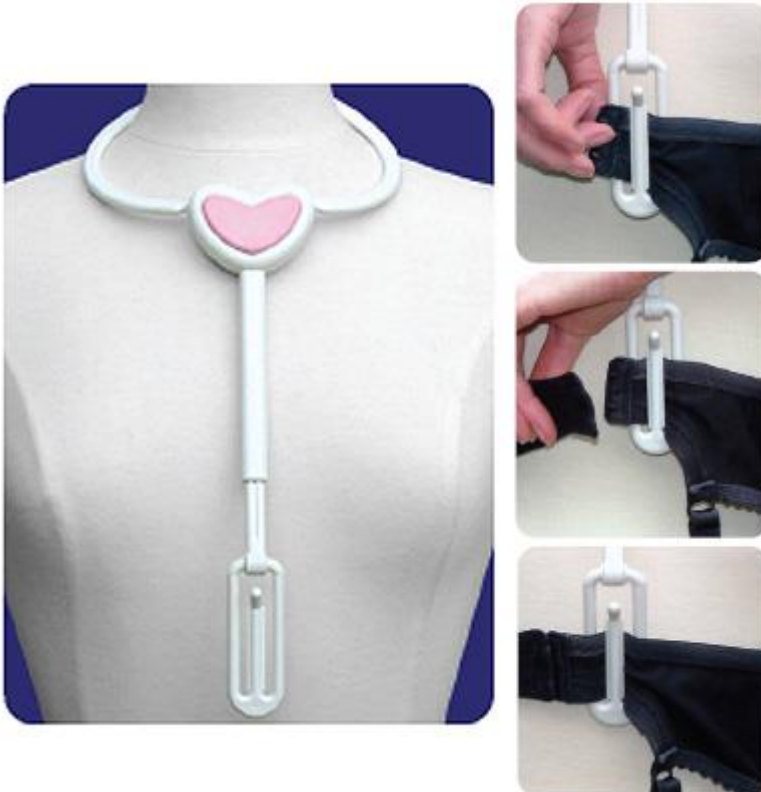
### *Bra fastening*

- Do hooks up in front, swivel bra round waist and then pull straps up (elastic straps are easier).
- A sports bra which has no fastenings can be pulled over your head.
- Adapt bra by having D-ring fastenings with a Velcro loop (if you would like to, feel free to discuss this with your occupational therapist).





- A 'Bra Angel' can assist with putting on a bra with the use of one hand. The Buckingham Bra Angel holds one end of the bra securely whilst the other end is brought round the body and attached together.







## Clothes fastenings

- Most can be mastered one-handed but the shirt cuff button on the side of the functional arm can be a problem.
- Options to overcome these problems are:
  - Sew the cuff button on with elastic thread so that it is possible to push hand through the fastened cuff
  - Use expanding cuff links
  - Fastening the button first and put hand through the cuff.
  - Use Velcro with button sewn back over the button hole.
- If you have a hook and eye fastening on your trousers:
  - Hold the eye or hook part of the waist band and with your thumb and forefinger pull the trouser band together so that you can slip the hook into the eye. This is easier if your clothes are looser, so a belt maybe helpful.
  - Raise button from fabric by sewing them on with a long shank, backing the top button with a smaller one, or putting two round buttons together.
- Buttonholes: vertical ones are easier to manage than horizontal



## Shoelaces

- Elastic laces or curly laces – once inserted and fastened, stretch to accommodate the foot.
- Trainers/shoes with Velcro fastenings
- Slip on shoes



- To tie up a shoe lace the one-handed methods require you to use ring, index, and middle finger and thumb to tighten the bow. If you look on the website 'you tube' and search for 'tying up a shoe lace with one hand' there are videos which demonstrate the technique successfully.

## Ties

- Purchase clip on ties
- Fitting a standard tie:
  1. Secure narrow end of tie between your knees
  2. Place the rest of the tie around your neck and tie knot.
  3. When undressing tie leave it tied and slip over head
- To adapt your own tie:
  1. Dress the tie as above
  2. Loosen the tie and remove over your head.





3. Sew a material elastic band that is measured to the width of the base of your neck.



## COOKING

### Food preparation:

- Use the surface height comfortable for you to prepare your food. For example, kitchen surface area, dining table or kitchen trolley.
- Consider using pre-prepared foods or ready made foods, if this is more convenient.

### To wear an apron

- Use an apron with a pocket, to hold utensils, hooked over your neck.
- Fasten the waist strap with Velcro grip or D-fastening.
- If waist fastening is permanently fixed it could be slipped over your head

### Chopping/ Peeling/Grating

- When peeling or chopping, secure items by using the spikes or vice on a food preparation board. Alternately you may find that placing the item on a damp tea towel or piece of non-slip mat, on a hard surface may assist.



- There are many compact choppers (electric and manual) available commercially that can be operated using one hand.



- When grating, use the vice on a food preparation board to hold the grater in place.



## Cutting bread

- Use pre-sliced bread
- You can use the vice in a kitchen workstation to cut a loaf of bread
- Use a cutting guide and board, sometimes known as a 'Bread Slicing Guide' this can also be used for other foods.



## Buttering bread

- Place bread against something steady like a chopping board or a 'Non-slip Mat' on a work surface and spread butter towards you.
- Use a spreading board/ buttering board. This is ideal for buttering bread or toast with only one hand. This board hooks over the edge of a work surface or table. The bread is held in place within the angle of the raised edges.



## Microwave

- Many pre-prepared vegetables can be brought and cooked in the microwave in their bag.
- Steam vegetables in the microwave with just a small amount of water.
- Pre-prepared rice can be brought from supermarkets, cooked in a bag and can be served immediately.

## Taking items out of the oven

- If you are worried about this or would like to practise taking things out of the oven please ask your occupational therapist and she can discuss and practise this with you.



## Tin Opening

- Use an electric one handed tin opener or a 'one touch' can opener
- Stabilise tin using knees, Belliclamp or clamp on food preparation board and open with tin opener in one hand.
- Use ring pull tins, may need to stabilise tin using above method.



## Jar/bottle opening

- Stabilise jar by using either, the vice on a food preparation board, placing between your knees, feet or against body with upper arm. Use a non slip mat on a work top to help grip the jar or bottle
- Use a non-slip jar opener; these are inverted cones of different sizes that will help to grip almost any size bottle/jar. See picture below.
- Use a 'spill not' jar opener which has three different size holders to secure your jars or bottles





## Saucepans

- A pan holder will secure a saucepan and stop it rotating when stirring. It also helps to keep the pan from accidentally turning and causing spills. Suction-cup feet secure the pan holder on the stove.



- To mix your food in the saucepan:
  1. Place the saucepan towards the front two hobs.
  2. Move the saucepan handle so it is directly in front of your torso.
  3. Use your torso to steady the saucepan handle and stir towards your body either clock wise or anti clockwise.
  4. Once the food is mixed, reposition the saucepan handle to the side to prevent it from being knocked.
- Use a very heavy pan e.g. copper, glass (heat proof) and flat cooking surface e.g. ceramic hob
- Use a wire mesh cooking basket to cook and strain vegetables, pasta or boil in the bag rice, this will eliminate the need to lift and drain a full pan of boiling water.



## Trays/trolleys (carrying meal/drinks)

- Single handed non-slip tray
- Put a non-slip mat on a tray to stabilise items
- Use a Kitchen trolley, stirring with one hand in the front rather than on the handle

## Washing and drying up dishes

- Use a dishwasher
- To wash the dishes:



1. Use a hand pump or sensor soap dispenser. This can be fitted to your kitchen sink so that it does not move when you are using it.
  2. Use a washing up brush with suction cups
  3. Use suction pads. Wash one item at a time. Fit the item on the suction pad and wash.
  4. Dampen a sponge and pour washing up liquid over it. Create suds. Wipe your cutlery over the sponge to wash.
- To dry the dishes:
    1. Place item on a tea towel on work surface and dry with hand
    2. Place items on a tea towel between your knees and dry with hand
  - Use plate rack and leave to dry, and then pack items away.

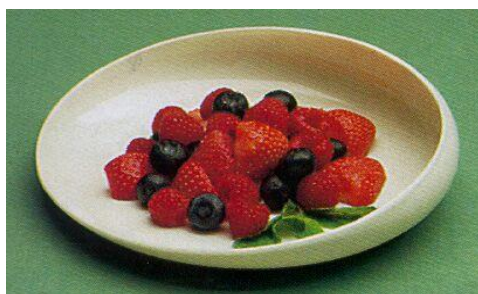


## Eating

- Adapted cutlery, such as a splayed fork, 'nelson knife' or 'Knork' cutlery. These utensils can be used for one handed eating by combining cutlery functions, for example the splayed fork is a pronged fork with edges designed for cutting food and a deep rounded body, which functions like a spoon.



- Cut food up first with a rocking knife and then use a fork to eat one handed.
- Use a non-slip mat to hold the plate still while you are eating.
- Use lipped plates or a plate guard to act as a wall to help pick up food.
- Suction egg cups, this enables an individual to eat an egg without the need to hold it steady.





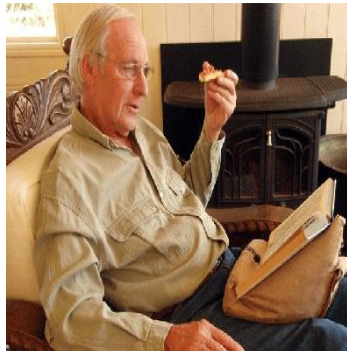


## WRITING

- If your dominant hand has been affected, the non-dominant hand needs to be trained to compensate and practice is needed. Ask your occupational therapist if you want advice on this.
- Start with patterns across the page and progress to letters. NB: joined up writing is easier.
- Purchase a students writing exercise book from stationery/book shops to practise writing skills.
- To steady the page while writing:
  1. Use a non-slip mat to put paper on
  2. Use paperweights

## READING

**The Bookseat;** moulds to any surface, enabling you to read without having to hold the book or laptop.



A computerised book can be easier to read as it is lighter and easier to change pages.





## SUPPLIERS OF ITEMS THAT CAN BE USED USING ONE HAND

For further information about the items listed within this booklet please see the contact list of suppliers below, they will be able to send you illustrated leaflets, current prices lists and assist with any other queries. Please note, these companies are not solely recommended by the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital. You can complete your own research to identify other stores, companies and websites where these items can be purchased. If you have a query or difficulty performing your activities of daily living then please do not hesitate to contact the therapy dept at the RNOH on 0208 909 5830.

COMPANY	TEL NO.	WEBSITE
Patterson Medical	0844 4 124330	<a href="http://www.homecraft-rolyan.com">www.homecraft-rolyan.com</a>
Promedics	01254 619000	<a href="http://www.promedics.co.uk">www.promedics.co.uk</a>
Nottingham Rehab Supplies	0845 1204522	<a href="http://www.nrs-uk.co.uk">www.nrs-uk.co.uk</a>
Sunrise Medical	01384 446688	<a href="http://www.sunrisemedical.co.uk">www.sunrisemedical.co.uk</a>
Mobility	01268 777000	<a href="http://www.mobility.co.uk">www.mobility.co.uk</a>
Keep Able	08705 202122	<a href="http://www.keepable.co.uk">www.keepable.co.uk</a>
Amazon		<a href="http://www.amazon.co.uk">www.amazon.co.uk</a>
Essential aids	01273 719 889	<a href="http://www.essentialaids.com">www.essentialaids.com</a>

*If you need to find anything else we suggest contacting the **Disability Living Foundation (DLF)** who has every piece of equipment ever listed!  
([www.dlf.org.uk](http://www.dlf.org.uk) Tel: 020 7289 6111)*



## USEFUL READING

'One handed in a two-handed world', 2nd edition revised by Tomye-Karen Mayer ISBN 0-9652805-1-9 provides further advice on activities such as how to put contact lenses in and advice on hair styling.

'Type with one hand by Nina Richardson' ISBN 0538682752

### Websites:

#### Parenting with one hand:

The 'Disabled Parents Network' is also a good resource and can be found at <http://disabledparentsnetwork.org.uk>

The Disability Pregnancy and Parenthood Information network produce a very helpful leaflet that patients can order free of charge from: <http://www.dppi.org.uk/> or contacted on: 0800 018 4730.

[www.dppi.org.uk](http://www.dppi.org.uk) the Disabled Parents Network is a very good resource they have several publications and practical guides. Particularly useful is the 'One Handed Parenting Guide' which is free to people with a disability.

[www.babydan.com](http://www.babydan.com) sells foot pedal operated child safety gates

[www.huggababy.co.uk](http://www.huggababy.co.uk) sells carry slings that can be used with one hand

#### Sites that relate to limb deficiency/amputation/prosthetics

[www.ontheotherhand.org](http://www.ontheotherhand.org) a self help website that is written by an OT with a partial hand.

<http://www.toysrbob.com/onearm> another website that is written by someone with one hand and gives practical tips on how to manage everyday tasks.

<http://www.reach.org.uk/reachcms> association for children with hand or arm deficiency

<http://www.amputee-coalition.org/index.html> a self help and information site

[www.mtb-amputee.com](http://www.mtb-amputee.com) Mountain biking with a high level amputation

[www.activeamp.org](http://www.activeamp.org) US website on amputees with an active lifestyle