

Tips and Ideas on Doing Things with One Hand

Due to either injury or surgery, there may be a period of time when you cannot use one of your hands. Your therapist will work with you around timings and precautions. This leaflet is a collection of suggestions that may assist you with day-to-day tasks.

Useful approaches to coping with one hand

- **Prepare, prepare, prepare.** If everything is already gathered and laid out within reach, the task will be much easier.
- Allow yourself extra time so that you do not feel rushed or under pressure.
- Ask for help where you can.
- Adapt your technique – is there another way of doing the task until you get your hand function back?
- Use resources that you already have, such as non-slip mats and electrical gadgets.
- Consider that it might be worth investing in equipment as well as adapting your technique.
- Search YouTube for videos on doing things with one hand, for example 'one handed shoe tying technique'.
- **Do not drive unless you have an adapted car.**

Tips for washing

Bathing/showering

- Consider a non-slip mat to avoid injury.
- A soap-on-a-rope or shower gel may be easier to use.
- Long-handled bath aids can make it easier to reach difficult areas.
- Sponges are easier than flannels to squeeze out with one hand.

Drying

- Using a towelling dressing gown instead of a towel can help to dry your body more easily.
- Consider using a highly absorbent travel/sports towel – these are smaller and lighter, and therefore easier to use one-handed.

Washing/drying your hair

- Think about changing your hairstyle to a more easily manageable one – hair will grow back.
- Washing hair over the bath or sink using a shower attachment can allow more control.
- Use a smaller towel for your hair.

Brushing teeth

- To apply toothpaste to your toothbrush, place your toothbrush on a flat surface with a crumpled flannel (or something similar) to hold it steady.
- Flip-top or pump-action toothpaste tubes are easier than screw top ones.

Tips for dressing

- Dress the affected hand/arm first.
- Choose clothes that are easier to put on and take off. Consider:
 - elastic waistbands
 - loose/baggy clothing with larger arm holes/wider sleeves
 - front hook bra/sports bra
 - cardigans or jackets rather than sweaters or jerseys
 - putting loops through zips to make the zip 'handle' longer
 - pre-tied ties.
- Consider purchases, such as:
 - button hooks
 - a dressing stick (which can help with pulling, pushing and holding in place)
 - Velcro closures or press studs on clothes that need fastening
 - a shoehorn, elastic shoes laces, quick-tie laces that have a button toggle or slip-on shoes.

Tips on food

Preparation and shopping

- Try online shopping with delivery or ask someone else to do your shopping for you.
- Consider pre-sliced or chopped food or ready meals.
- Consider purchases, such as:
 - a food processor
 - an electric can opener
 - an electric jar opener or high friction mat (such as the Dycem brand)
 - one-handed chopping board (various models are available)
 - non-slip mats / tea towels to increase the friction and 'hold' a bowl or pot as you stir or mix ingredients together.
 - a stove guard to 'hold' your pot as you stir.

Eating

- Use a plate or bowl with raised edges.
- Use a non-slip mat or tea towel to help keep the plate still.
- Consider purchases, such as
 - rocker knives
 - a plate guard
 - a combination knife and fork utensil.

Storing food

- Use plastic bags rather than cling film or foil.
- Try lining a bowl with a plastic bag and then pouring your food into it.
- Make sure you can close and open a container before using it.
- Store heavier, regularly-used or awkward shaped items on your work surface.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about the use of your affected hand, please talk to your therapist at your next appointment. If your concerns are more urgent, you can contact the **hand therapy team** on **020 8725 1038** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

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