

# A Guide for Managing Tasks Using One Hand

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## Introduction

Following an injury to your hand or upper limb, completing daily tasks and activities can become challenging. You may have been advised to avoid using your injured hand for function or you may have limited use of your injured hand due to issues such as swelling or pain.

It is possible to modify certain tasks to help you maintain your independence. This booklet provides advice and guidance for completing tasks one handed. However, there is nothing wrong with asking others for help, especially if there are any safety concerns.

Some one handed techniques may take time and practice to get used to and might not be appropriate for everyone.

This booklet also includes details for some pieces of equipment which are available to purchase online or in store.

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.

## Personal Care

### Washing

- Using a sponge is easier to squeeze water out of compared to a flannel. Position the sponge on a flat surface or between your knees to add soap.
- Sit down to wash your unaffected side to make the task easier. Position a sponge between your knees and rub your hand/forearm against the sponge.
- A long handled sponge can be useful for washing your back, armpits and harder to reach areas.
- Use a pump dispenser for products if available.
- Consider using a non-slip mat for safety, especially if transferring out of a bath. You may feel safer using a bath board to sit on over the bath.

## Productivity

### Reading/writing

- A book seat can be used to read your book without having to hold it. This can also be used for electronic devices such as a tablet. A computerised device such as a kindle is more lightweight and may be easier to use.
- You could also consider the use of audio books.
- You may now need to use your non dominant hand for writing and this can take some getting used to. To practice, begin with forming patterns on a page then progress to forming letters. Joined up writing is generally easier to manage.
- A paperweight or non slip mat may be useful to prevent paper from sliding.

### Changing Sheets

- It is easier to use fitted sheets. Fit one corner of the sheet first and stretch over to the next corner. Repeat this for all four corners.
- When fitting a duvet cover, firstly lay the cover out on the bed. Put the duvet into one corner and secure with a peg. Put the duvet into the next corner and secure with another peg. Shake the cover down and do up.

## Safety

Cooking with one hand can be challenging and presents some safety concerns. If you are wearing a splint, ensure it is kept away from heat so it doesn't burn, melt or change shape. Additionally, if you are experiencing any loss of sensation in your hands, you need to be extremely careful when using hobs, ovens and sharp objects.

## Domestic Tasks Continued

### Kettle

- Use a lightweight plastic jug to fill the kettle with water. Ensure the kettle faces in the correct position for pouring.
- Cordless or small travel kettles may be easier to use and less heavy.
- Consider the use of a kettle tipper which makes pouring easier.

### Saucepans

- Use a draining spoon to lift vegetables from a saucepan. Alternatively, place a colander in a clean, empty sink and pour the contents of the saucepan into it.
- Use items such as a vegetable basket or wire basket which can be inserted into a saucepan for cooking. Once cooked, this can be lifted out to allow the water to drain before transferring the food onto a plate.

### Carrying food/drinks

- To assist with carrying food and drinks, there are single handed non slip trays available.
- Your Occupational Therapist may recommend a special trolley or wheelchair tray to use. You would need to be assessed for one of these.

### Washing and drying dishes

- Using a dishwasher is the easiest option
- If washing dishes in a sink, use a brush with a suction cap. The item can be moved over the brush and washed.
- Using a drying rack is useful for leaving items to dry before packing away.

## Personal Care Continued

### Drying

- Sit down to dry your unaffected hand/arm. Place a towel over your knees rub your hand against the towel.
- A towelling bath robe can be used to quickly dry yourself.

### Dressing

- Dress your affected side first. This will enable you to have more control with your functional arm. Undress your affected side last.
- Sports bras can easily be pulled over your head. Alternatively, do up your bra at the front and then swivel it round.
- Choose loose fitting clothing with large neck lines and sleeves.
- Consider using elasticated shoe laces.

### Hair

- You may find using hair accessories such as clips or one handed hair ties useful to keep hair away from your face.
- Dry your hair as much as possible with a towel. Cordless hot brushes could also be used to simplify the task.

### Shaving and hair removal

- Use an electric razor to shave your face.
- A hair removal cream could be used on hard to reach areas such as the armpits.

### Nails

- An emery board can be used by securing it to a table using either a non slip material or double sided sticky tape. A suction cup alternative for emery boards and nail brushes can be attached to surfaces, such as a table. Run your nails along the board to file them.

## Personal Care Continued

### Teeth

- Use a flip lid toothpaste tube to dispense onto toothbrush.
- A disposable flossing tool with a handle can be used to aid flossing your teeth.
- For cleaning false teeth, soak them before cleaning. Place a towel on your lap and secure dentures between your knees. Use a toothbrush to clean the teeth, rotating them until the task is complete.

### Toileting

- Use boxed tissues as opposed to toilet roll
- The toilet roll holder should be positioned on the side of your functional arm.
- To tear toilet roll, pinch the sheet using your thumb and ring finger then use your index and middle fingers to tear.

### Eating

- There are various adapted pieces of cutlery available which combine the function of both a fork and knife.
- Using a bowl or lipped plate to eat your food from can prevent food being pushed off your plate.
- When eating out, ask the kitchen staff to cut your food for you before serving it. Alternatively, order food that does not require cutting up.
- Using a non slip mat help keep bowls and plates in place.

## Domestic Tasks

### Food Preparation

- Purchase pre-prepared food items such as salad, vegetables, rice and meat. It is generally safer to use microwaves than ovens one handed.
- There are various chopping boards available that have adaptations such as metal spikes which help secure food in place while you chop/peel items.
- There are manual choppers available to purchase to help with larger quantities of food.
- Using non-slip mats on the work surface can prevent items of crockery from slipping whilst you are preparing food.
- Try using an apron with Velcro fastening.
- Use a buttering board or spreader board to assist with buttering bread. This is a board with raised edges which prevents bread from slipping whilst you are buttering it.
- Use flip lids or pump dispensers for commonly used liquids such as cooking oil and sauces.

### Jar/bottle/tin opening

- To open a jar, place it on a non slip mat. Use a second piece of non slip material on the lid while you press down with the palm of your hand and turn the lid open.
- Alternatively, secure the jar or bottle between your knees and use your unaffected hand to twist the lid open.
- Consider using a one touch or electric tin opener. There are many different types available to purchase. It may be worth trialling these before purchasing. Speak with your Occupational Therapist about the different types available.
- Ask someone to open cans for you and store the contents in an easy to open container for use later.
- Tins with ring pulls are generally easier to use.