

PATIENT INFORMATION

Managing at Home with an Upper Limb Injury



There are some areas of daily living which many people find particularly difficult following an injury or/surgery on an upper limb. We have tried to provide some helpful hints and advice within this leaflet to enable you to cope as well as possible in the weeks following your hospital admission.

PERSONAL CARE

If your arm is immobilised in a plaster cast you **must not** let your plaster get wet, and if you are wearing a splint it may change its shape if immersed in hot water. Bathing therefore is **not** recommended. You can, however, shower **as long as your plaster is well protected by a plastic bag**. The safest way to wash though will be to strip wash at a sink.

It may be that you have been advised to restrict the movement of your arm to avoid putting undue strain on your limb. In order to help you to access underneath your armpit to wash effectively, you may find it useful to bend forward, allowing your arm to gently swing forward in a pendulum motion. This must be done carefully and in a controlled manner. Sometimes people don't have specific restrictions imposed upon them but experience difficulty reaching down to their feet if the injury is the upper arm or shoulder, and balance can be affected if the arm is held close to the body eg in a sling or collar and cuff. A sponge on a long stick may help (which can be purchased from retailers such as Boots), and, if strip washing at the sink, you may feel safer sitting on a high stool.

SHAVING

If your dominant side is affected, then this may be difficult

and you may require assistance. If your injury is on your non-dominant side then an electric razor may prove easier than a wet shave.

BRUSHING YOUR TEETH



When applying the toothpaste to the brush, support the brush on top of a flannel to stop it from tipping; alternatively, put some toothpaste in your mouth and then brush!

HAIR WASHING



You will almost certainly need assistance from another person.

DRESSING

If you have been told to “dress over” your arm, then you will require loose clothing, probably which fastens down the front so that you can leave some buttons undone. If you are able to dress your arm into your clothing, then you will find it easier to dress the affected side first. Front fastening, loose clothing, will always be easier.

Sitting to dress and undress will be safer than standing.

Trousers with an elasticated waist, such as jogging bottoms, will be easier to cope with than trying to do zips and fastenings. Loose socks will be easier to put on than sports socks, and slip on shoes will be easier than trying to tie shoe laces, although elastic shoe laces are now available.

KITCHEN TASKS



If you don't have a cordless kettle, you may find it difficult to plug the lead into the back of the kettle one handed. It may be easier to fill the kettle using a jug and keep the appliance plugged in (if you have a socket where you are able to switch off the electricity supply).

Buy sliced food to reduce the need to cut.

Try to stick to the hobs and grill rather than attempting to get heavy items out of the oven. A microwave is also a safer option than an oven. NB – a grill pan may be difficult to safely control if it does not have a central handle.

Use your knees to hold jars and bottles as you open them, or ask someone to loosen them for you.

When buttering bread, wedge it into a corner of a tray to prevent it moving as you try to make a sandwich.

Opening tins will be very difficult – an electric tin opener may be the best option which can be bought from Argos amongst other places.



When cooking vegetables, use a colander to drain the water off them, or cook them in a chip basket so that you can lift the vegetables out of the hot water without needing to strain them.

FEEDING



If you are struggling to grip cutlery, you should try padding the handle, eg by wrapping a bandage around it.

If you are unable to exert pressure and so cannot cut up your food, you may need someone to cut it for you. If there is nobody available to do this for you, there are some small pieces of adapted cutlery available that may assist you. These can be purchased from Argos or a good chemist.

LAUNDRY



Pegging washing out will be a problem – use a clothes horse or maiden instead.

SHOPPING



Many shops now deliver free of charge or if you are on the Internet, you can order on line.

Alternatively, British Red Cross may be able to help Sefton Residents (tel 01704 530098) or Age Concern Central Lancs residents (01695 571522).

During your contact with us, it is important that you are happy with your care and treatment. Please speak to a member of staff and/or the ward/department Sister/Charge Nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

REHABILITATION

If you have any concerns or questions regarding your rehabilitation, please contact Nicola Ivanovic, Director of Rehabilitation, on tel no 01704 704147.

INFECTION CONTROL REQUEST

Preventing infections is a crucial part of our patients' care. To ensure that our standards remain high our staff have regular infection prevention and control training and their practice is monitored in the workplace. We ask patients and visitors to assist us in preventing infections by cleaning their hands at regular intervals and informing staff of areas within the hospital that appear soiled.

As a patient there may be times that you are unsure whether a staff member has cleaned their hands; if in doubt please ask the staff member and they will be only too happy to put your mind at ease by cleaning their hands so that you can see them.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

ANY CONDITION SPECIFIC DANGER SIGNALS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

CONTACT INFORMATION IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CONDITION

Your own GP –

OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS/CONTACTS:

NHS 111

Stop Smoking Helpline (Sefton) - 0300 100 1000

Stop Smoking Helpline (West Lancashire) - 0800 328 6297

**Please call 01704 704714 if you need
this leaflet in an alternative format**

Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust

Ormskirk & District General Hospital
Wigan Road, Ormskirk, L39 2AZ
Tel: (01695) 577111

Southport & Formby District General Hospital
Town Lane, Kew, Southport, PR8 6PN
Tel: (01704) 547471

FOR APPOINTMENTS

Telephone (01695) 656680
Email soh-tr.appointments@nhs.net

Please remember to complete the **attached Friends and Family Test**.
Alternatively, you can complete the *Friends and Family Test* on-line by going to: southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/FFT
Thank you

Author: Sally Nicol
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