



Orthopaedic Department

General advice following hand and wrist surgery

Introduction

Following an operation or injury to the wrist or hand, you may be unable to use the hand fully for a period of time. The following information has been written to help you plan and learn how to manage your every day tasks 'one handed'.

If you have a date planned for surgery think ahead, you may need to ask for the following help:

- Preparing meals
- Housework
- Transport (returning home or attending future appointments) while you are unable to drive
- Childcare

General tips

- Remember that you may not be able to write clearly or to sign cheques if your dominant hand is operated on.
- Ask someone to loosen tight containers such as coffee jars for you.
- Get help in opening medication containers. You may need to leave these open but out of the reach of children.
- A shoulder bag or rucksack may be useful so that the good hand is free to use.

Washing

- Cover the hand with a tied plastic bag securely taped high up on the arm while washing; do not leave this on for any longer than necessary to prevent the wound from 'sweating'. Alternatively keep arm out of the water whilst showering or bathing.
- You may wish to self-pay for a professional water-resistant garment for the finger, hand or whole arm. Further information can be found at <https://limboproducts.co.uk>; paper leaflets from the company are available from the plaster rooms both at University Hospital and Hospital of St. Cross.
- If you cannot dry your back, use a towelling dressing gown.
- Use a non slip mat in the bath or shower.
- Long handled sponges may help.



Patient Information

- Flip top lids or pump dispensers are easier to use than a screw top bottle for soap and shampoo.
- Consider an electric toothbrush or razor.

Dressing

- Choose wide sleeved shirts or tops with loose cuffs
- Slip-on shoes maybe easier than lace ups
- Trousers or skirts with elastic waistbands. Avoid clothes with lots of buttons or fasteners; try a camisole instead of a bra.

Preparation of Food

- Buy ahead to avoid shopping.
- Ready meals that can be heated in a microwave may be a preferred option.
- Sandwiches, stews and soups that require no cutting are easier to manage.
- Electric tin openers are good for one handed use.

Swelling and Scars

- Swelling in the hand may be a problem following the surgery.
- Maintaining the hand in an elevated (raised) position such as on pillows when sitting will improve this.
- If you choose to cool the hand or arm using ice, avoid prolonged periods or direct contact with the skin to prevent cold burns or wetting your dressings.
- Whilst walking short-term, use of a sling or tucking the hand inside a jacket will help to prevent fluid pooling in the fingers and hand.
- Scars may be sensitive and tender following surgery. Massaging with a non-perfumed moisturiser such as E45 or aqueous cream as soon as the wound has healed may help minimise this problem.

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Pain Control

You may experience pain following surgery. It is important that pain is controlled during rehabilitation to allow movement and to prevent joint stiffness and soft tissue tightness. To allow this we recommend regular use of painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs, as advised by your doctor.

Physiotherapy

Your consultant will advise you if you need physiotherapy following surgery.

Further Information

If you need further information please contact your Therapy Department:

University Hospital, Coventry and Warwickshire: Tel 024 7696 6016

Rugby, St Cross Hospital: Tel 01788 663257 For further information please visit our hand service web site <http://tinyurl.com/uhcwhand>

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6861 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

Patient Information

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

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