



STROKE SA

STROKE FACT SHEET

SINGLE HANDED

Many tasks around the home can be managed adequately by a person with the use of one hand, with a little practice, perseverance and/or help of an appropriate aid. Here is a list of some of the more common everyday tasks and some ideas for coping with them.

In The Kitchen

Opening Containers: Plastic bags and cardboard cartons can be opened by cutting with good sharp scissors. Some can be used with either hand and will cut anything in the kitchen. Special left-handed scissors can be bought.

Bottles and jars can be opened by using a jar opener fixed to a wall or undersurface of an upper cupboard, or a dome shaped jar opener with a rubber lining that grips the lid so the jar can be opened with one hand. "V" shaped metal wedge jar openers which grip the lid of the jar can also be used.

Tins can be opened with hand-held electric openers, or by using wall mounted ones. Manual can openers can be used in conjunction with a holding device.

Storage containers with a press-button airtight seal on the lid are easy to use with one hand.

Cutting, Chopping, Grating and Vegetable Preparation: All chopping jobs are made easier if knives are kept very sharp. A sturdy knife sharpener is extremely useful. Some foods can be cut with scissors or with an electric knife.

Chopping boards with suction feet to keep them stable on the bench, and with stainless steel spikes to hold the item to be cut, are available either from occupational therapists or commercially.

Bell shaped choppers which are operated by pushing down on the top of the handle with one hand are useful for chopping small items such as onions or parsley. Rotary disc grater/slicer/shredders which lock on to the bench with suction pads are also useful.

Some vegetables, e.g. new potatoes and pumpkin, are more nutritious if cooked unpeeled. Many vegetables can be scrubbed instead of peeled, and suction brushes are useful for this. A spike board can be used to hold the vegetable.

Mixing: Some mixing bowls have suction pads on the base enabling them to be firmly attached to the bench during mixing. Hand held mixers are useful and convenient. Simple balloon whisks can be used for light whipping. Some food processors can be extremely useful for one-handed operation.

A one-handed rolling pin can be used for pastry making. Alternatively, ready-rolled frozen pastry sheets can be substituted.

Cooking: Non-stick pans are light to handle and relatively easy to clean. A magnetic holder for saucepan handles keeps the saucepan steady whilst stirring and when turning meat in the frying pan.

Tongs are useful for lifting and turning, and slotted spoons or ladles can be used for serving vegetables from the saucepan. Consider using a steamer or chip basket which can be lifted from the pan without straining.

Washing Up: Washing up brushes with suction caps to attach them to the base or side of the sink are available.

At the Table: The important items are a stable plate and a good sharp knife. A non-slip mat or thin sheet of foam sponge can help to stabilize a plate. A plate with a rim all around with stop food from being pushed over the edge.

For cutting food, use a very sharp knife with a curved end so that a pressing and rocking action is used to cut rather than a sawing action. For boiled eggs, there are suction eggs cups available which grip both the egg and the plate or bench, and egg cutters for snipping off the top.

When buttering bread, a short knife grasped in the fingers while the bread is held down by the thumb, a plate with a rim, or a chopping board with edges on two sides can be used.

Many of the items mentioned can be purchased in specialty kitchen shops or in kitchenware departments of large stores.

In the Bathroom

Some products to help with washing, drying and grooming include the following:

A hand shower attachment makes showering easier. If balance is affected by having one arm out of action it may be safer to position grab rails beside the bath and toilet and in the shower recess. A shower stool can be used for extra safety, and seats are available which span the bath for use with an overhead shower or hand shower attachment.

Soap encased either in the toe of an old stocking tied to the tap or rail, or in a toweling mitt or on a rope, can overcome the problem of chasing slippery soap.

Long handled brushes and sponges reach backs and toes more easily, and a shower caddy to hold all essential articles can be useful.

A toweling gown or cape absorbs moisture after bathing and a toweling sling with tapes can be stabilized around a mobile hand at one end and manipulated with the mobile hand to dry the back.

When cleaning teeth, a toothpaste pump dispenser can be useful. Dentures can be cleaned by rubbing them against a denture or nail brush on a suction cup positioned on the hand basin.

Hair drying can be made easier by using a hairdryer on a stand.

Finger nails can be shaped using a large emery board on suction cups, or fixed to the table or bench with a clamp.

Jewellery clasps may need to be changed to an easier style. If buying new necklaces, ones that fit over the head are preferable.

Clothing

In order to dress with one hand, alternative methods are required, and clothing needs to be chosen with a view to suitability. Look for garments features such as front openings, elasticized waists and cuffs, reasonably wide neck openings and larger armholes, action backs and stretch knits.

Adaptions to clothing may be helpful. Preferably, use Velcro fastenings instead of small buttons and ties. On long sleeved shirts join cuffs with hat elastic. Bras may need to be converted to front opening. Trousers with fly openings could have tape with Velcro fastenings and D rings added to waists to assist in closing the garment.

Neckties can be made with hidden fastenings so that it is not necessary to knot the tie each time. Where there is difficulty dressing an affected arm, opening the sleeve and adding fastenings along the other edge may be required.

A dressing stick made from a length of dowel, preferably shaped like a coat hanger with a hook on one or both ends can be used to reach difficult corners. Button hooks consisting of a short length of dowel with a loop of wire at the end which loops around the button can make it easier to manage buttons.

Tying shoe laces is not easy. One handed shoe lacing is an option for some people. Elastic shoe laces allow shoes to be slipped on or off. Shoes which have zips or Velcro fastenings may be easier to manage. Boots jacks can be used if there is difficulty positioning the foot. A shoe aid may be necessary to remove the shoe.

Recreation and Leisure

There are a number of crafts, games and leisure activities that can be managed using one hand. It may be necessary to adapt the activity or the environment or provide some simple devices to assist. Here are some suggestions:

Table and Board Games: A thin piece of non-slip matting will prevent the board from moving about on the table.

Card Games: A battery powered automatic card shuffler and a card holder to hold the “hand” of cards can be used. A card holder can be improvised by using a stiff-bristled wooden-back scrubbing brush, laying it on its back on the table and inserting the cards into the bristles.

Needlecrafts: An embroidery hoop on an adjustable stand clamped to the table eliminates the need to hold the fabric whilst stitching.

Machine Sewing: Computerised sewing machines make one-handed sewing much easier with features such as bobbin winding in the bobbin case, push button start/stop sewing instead of a foot pedal, eliminating the need to hold threads at the start of sewing, and pushing on selection and programming of patterns for creative embroidery and decoration.

Knitting: There are several styles of one-handed knitting devices available which all clamp to the table or arm of a chair to hold one knitting needle, while the knitter uses the functioning hand to knit.

Crocheting: A crochet hook can be held in a small vice on the table with the hook angled towards the good hand. The crochet is then worked onto the hook instead of holding the work and inserting the hook into it.

Gardening: Long handled tools can be adapted with a cuff and extra handle to facilitate working one handed. A barrow is available with two wheels and a single handle, making it suitable for one-handed use and assisting with balance if necessary.

Sitting on a garden stool may make it easier to garden in the soil, using hand tools with handles 30-40cm long, which are available from hardware stores and nurseries.

Fishing: A harness to support the fishing rod and pre-tied hooks on a trace with a loop can facilitate continued enjoyment of this activity. Further adaptation of equipment may be necessary.

Bowls: A large flattened rubber ferrule will prevent a walking stick from making holes in the bowling green.

Telephone: Difficulty holding the telephone receiver and taking down messages can be overcome by using a telephone receiver holder – a flexible arm on a table base with a clip to hold the telephone hand piece. The height and angle can be adjusted to suit the user, leaving the functional hand free to dial and write.

“Hands-Free” telephones are also available, and earphones can be used.

Managing in Bed

Learning to use body movements and unaffected limbs is important when changing positions in bed. Equipment may be required by some people to enable them to sit up. A free-standing self-help pole can be used with a domestic bed. It provides an overhead grip which the person pulls on to lift their body weight. Other aids are available which are positioned under the mattress to give a hand grip on each side of the bed. This can be used to assist in turning when coming to a seated position or as a support when rising to stand from the bed.

Wheelchairs:

In order to be mobile, it may be necessary to consider the use of a one-arm drive wheelchair. This style of wheelchair usually consists of a standard wheelchair frame with a mechanism to drive or move the wheelchair using only one hand.

These are some suggestions which may enable people to achieve independence in some activities of daily living.

There may well be some activities that are too time-consuming, exhausting or frustrating to realistically achieve. In such instances, it may be wise to accept assistance so you can conserve your energy to do those things which you really enjoy.

For more information contact:

Independent Living Centre – 8266 5260

Home Health Equipment – 8360 0700

Technical Aids for the Disabled – 8261 2922

Or phone **STROKE SA – 83524644**