

# Assistive devices and equipment to help with hand function

This leaflet gives information on what types of equipment are available to help you with your day-to-day living. If you have any questions, please speak to your therapist.

Due to your arthritis, the way you can use your hands may have changed leaving you with:

- reduced range of movement
- reduced strength
- reduced ability to feel (sensation)
- pain.

Everyday tasks such as washing, dressing, eating, drinking, domestic and work tasks still need to be done, but can be difficult and you may need help to do them.

It is important to exercise to keep and regain as much movement and strength as you can. While your hand function is limited, some tasks can still be done by using alternative techniques or adaptive equipment. Some of the suggestions below involve equipment that you might need to buy, but others are things you already have which you can make simple changes to.

Before buying any equipment or devices, you could ask friends or family if they have anything similar for you to try, to see if it would be helpful for you.

## Some examples of adaptations and equipment

### General tasks

- **Smart technology.** Voice activated technology (such as Hive, Google, Alexa, Apple) can be used to control plugs, lights, door locks and other things from your mobile phone.
- **Non-slip pads or mats.** These can reduce the pressure needed to stabilise items, for example, a chopping board, or to help open a jar.
- **Adapted/built-up handles.** Adhesive foam or foam tubing can be placed on the handle (for example, cutlery, toothbrushes, and pens). This would help to improve grip.
- **Plastic plug pulls.** These simply stick to the back of a standard plug to add a handle, making it easier to pull a plug from its socket.
- **House or car key adaptors.** A key holder that increases the surface area of the key to help grip or give more leverage. These devices usually hold one to two keys.
- **Pen or pencil grips.** These are designed to improve your grip on a small item. There is now a wide range available.
- **Tablet, book and newspaper holders.** Special stands which can hold a tablet, phone, book or newspaper open and upright.

## Washing and dressing tasks

- **Tap turners.** These are used to make conventional cross shape or crystal taps into lever taps. Lever taps are now much easier to find in hardware stores, or ask your plumber. Very tight taps can aggravate hand pain.
- **Long-handled sponge.** This can be used to extend your reach, enabling you to wash your back and legs.
- **Adapted spring-loaded scissors or long-handled nail scissors.** These can be used to cut finger or toe nails.
- **Soap on a rope or pump-action soap.** If your grip strength is weak and it is hard to maintain a grip for an extended time, these can help.
- **Bottom wipers.** These long-handled aids hold toilet paper which is released by the push of a button. It helps when you have limited movement and dexterity.
- **Button hooks.** These can be used if you have difficulty managing buttons.
- **Ribbon.** Loops of ribbon or tape can be sewn onto the inside of waist bands to help you pull up trousers and skirts. You can also attach ribbon to zips with a loop so that you can hook your finger in to make it easier to pull.
- **Velcro®.** This can be used in all sorts of ways, depending on your needs.
- **Velcro® or front-opening bras.** Velcro® bras make it a lot easier to put on and take off your bra. Front-opening bras are good if you have limited movement and you find reaching around to your back difficult.
- **Sock aid.** These can help you to put your socks or stockings on if you have difficulty reaching down to your feet.
- **Long-handled shoe horn.** This can help you put on and take off socks and shoes.
- **Long-handled reacher.** This can help you to reach smaller items. Different types are available. Some have a locking device which is useful if you have a weak grip.

## Eating and drinking

- **Adapted cutlery.** Ordinary cutlery with padded handles or specially-designed cutlery.
- **Lightweight, insulated cups and mugs with large handles.** Large handles make it easier to hold them and stop too much pressure on a few joints.

## Domestic tasks

- **Lightweight or easy-grip kitchen utensils.** A selection of these can be found in most large supermarkets or online.
- **Bottle openers.** Many different types are available.
- **L-shaped (reflex) knife.** This is a knife that is often used by people with arthritis. The pressure goes through larger joints, instead of your wrist, and keeps your wrist straight.
- **Cutting board with stainless steel nails.** This is food preparation board that has a set of spikes to secure food while it is being prepared or sliced. A wooden chopping board can easily be adapted to make it easier for you to cut and hold vegetables.
- **Stainless steel cooking basket.** This lets you cook and strain vegetables without lifting a heavy pan full of boiling water.
- **Pan handle holder.** This holds a pan's handle to stop the pan from moving, so that you can use both hands to stir.
- **Suction mixing bowl.** This secures to the worktop so that you can use both hands to stir.
- **Kettle tipper.** This can help with tipping the kettle so that you do not have to lift it. This is useful if you have a weak or painful wrist.

- **Easy-pull kitchen drawers.** Drawers can be adapted to pull more easily by oiling or soaping the runners and/or changing the handles.
- **Adapted or electric can opener.** There are lots of types of can opener. If you are choosing an electric can opener, make sure that it is not too heavy for your wrist.
- **Food processor.** This can speed up and reduce the amount of effort needed to prepare food, especially chopping.

## Contact us

Your therapist was ..... If you have any questions or would like to change your appointment, please contact us, **t:** 020 7188 4172 or 4174, **e:** [handtherapyappointments@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:handtherapyappointments@gstt.nhs.uk), Monday to Friday, 8am-5pm.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Pharmacy medicines helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. **t:** 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our patient advice and liaison service (pals). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (pals)      **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)  
**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)      **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch. **t:** 020 7188 8815      **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111      **w:** [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk)

## NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing. **w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Get involved and have your say: become a member of the trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.

**t:** 0800 731 0319      **e:** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk)      **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)

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