

## Assistive Devices for Grooming, Dressing, Preparing and Eating meals- Family/Patient Information

### Which assistive devices can help with grooming?

Individuals who have had a stroke may find it difficult to groom. The next section will give you ideas about what assistive devices can be used to make it easier to:

- **Cut your nails:**



If you have difficulty cutting your nails, you can try to soak them in warm water before doing so. This will make them softer and easier to cut. Clippers can be easier to use than scissors. Their design makes them easier to manipulate.

If you have difficulty using a regular clipper because you lack strength in your hand, the clipper below may help you. It is designed to help you cut your nails using a minimal amount of force. Also, its shape makes it easier for you to grasp.



- **Shaving:**



If you feel that the sensation of your face is not the same as it was before you had your stroke, it is safer for you to use an electric shaver instead of a manual stick razor. Electric shavers decrease the risks of cutting yourself. Also, it may be easier for you to shave in front of a mirror so that you can see what you are doing.

- **Cleaning your teeth:**

If you have difficulty squeezing the toothpaste out of the tube, you can use a tube dispenser. This allows you to put toothpaste on your toothbrush while using only one hand.



- While brushing your teeth, you may find that using

your strong hand to hold the toothbrush is easier. However, it is sometimes recommended that you still try to use your weak hands in daily task if regaining function is one of your rehabilitation goals. If you have dentures, you can use a one-handed technique to soak them. For example, you can open the container and put them in water or in a denture cleansing liquid using only your strong hand.

- **Applying makeup:**

Applying makeup can boost your morale. Try to continue wearing makeup as you would normally. If you have difficulty grasping the brush, a padded handle may help.

- **Washing, blowing and combing your hair:**

Washing and blow-drying your hair can be difficult if one of your arms is weak. If you have difficulty grasping the brush when you comb your hair, the handle can be padded. It will be easier for you to grasp the brush since the handle will be bigger.



Also, a universal cuff can be added so that you will not have



grasping the brush. This cuff allows you to hold the brush without grasping it.

A long-handle comb can help you to reach the hair at the back of your head. The long-handle comb allows you to comb your hair without having to lift your arm as high as with a regular comb.

If you feel that these tasks are too difficult to do by yourself, ask the help of your friends or family members for assistance.

This site does not show all the available assistive devices for grooming. There are other types of devices that can be helpful; you can ask your health care professional or search for information on the Internet.



## Which assistive device can help with dressing?

There are many reasons why people who have had a stroke have problems getting dressed and undressed. Assistive devices can help them to do it by themselves and to help the care provider.

- **General Rule:**

*Dressing techniques:* Dress the weaker side first and undress it last.

*Undressing techniques:* Techniques are always reversed for undressing.

- **General advices:**

- Dressing and undressing should be done in a warm, comfortable environment. It will help the individuals to focus on the task,
- Encourage the person to sit in a chair to dress him/her self,
- Encourage the individual who has had a stroke to contribute as much as they can to the task

***! Do not rush, take time and rest as needed!***

- Avoid tight fitting clothes.
- Reduce the number of clothes worn,
- Choose clothes made from cotton and natural fibers. This is especially important for someone who spends much of their time sitting. These fabrics are also easier to launder.

- **Putting on Sweater/Shirt**

***Dressing techniques:***

- Lay the garment on the your lap or in front of you on a bed, with the back facing upwards,
- Put in your weaker arm first. Pull the sleeve of the sweater or shirt over your elbow. It will prevent the sleeve from falling,
- When the weaker arm is in, put the other arm into the other sleeve,
- Use the strong hand to grip the back of the sweater or shirt and pull it over your head.

***Undressing techniques:*** Remove clothing from your stronger arm first and then on the weaker one.

***Dressing aids:***

- **Button hook:**

If you have difficulty buttoning and unbuttoning, a button hook can help you.



- **Velcro:**

If you have difficulty buttoning, you can use Velcro fastening. There is a rough side and a smooth side. Velcro is available at the local fabric stores.

- **Long-handled reacher:**

It can help you:

- If you have difficulty reaching clothes that are placed too high, too low or too far from you or



Grooming, dressing, preparing and eating meals

- If you use a wheelchair, it may help you to take clothes off the closet or pick up objects that are on the floor.

- **Putting on Pants:**

*Dressing techniques:*

- Dress the weaker leg first. Ensure that the leg is in the garment as far as possible,
- Than put the strong leg in,
- Bring your pants up to mid-thigh and stand once to pull both garments up.

***! Extra-care is needed for people who have balance difficulty in standing!***

A therapist can show you how to dress without standing up if this is safer for you. For example, if you cannot stand or if you have a lot of difficulty, put pants on while lying on the bed.

*Undressing techniques:*

- Stand only once to pull down all the lower garments,
- Sit to remove them

*Dressing aids:*

- **Dressing stick:**

If you have difficulty getting your leg into the pant, a dressing stick may help you.

- **Footstool:**

- If you have difficulty bending and reaching your lower leg and feet, a footstool may help you because it will raise your feet,
- You may need the help of another individual in getting dressed. Speak with a health professional who knows how to make dressing easier after a stroke. This person is usually an occupational therapist,
- To prevent falls when bringing pants up, the individuals who has had a stroke should never stand in socks or barefoot.

- **Other garments:**

- **Sock aids:**

If you have difficulty bending forward to put your socks on or holding your sock with one hand, a sock aid may help you make it easier



- **Long-handled shoe horn:**

If you have difficulty bending and putting your shoes on, a long-handled shoe horn may help you.

- **Elastic shoe laces:**

If you have difficulty lacing your shoes, elastic shoe laces may help you.



- **Bras:** If you have difficulty putting on your bra:

- You can fasten it at the front around your waist, then turn it around, and put your arms in or,
- You can buy a front fastening bra.

- **Neckties:**

If you have difficulty putting a necktie:

- Do not loosen the tie completely after wearing it so that you can re-use the knot by just slipping it over your head with one hand or,

- You can purchase a clip that is put on the tie which saves you from having to tie a knot.



## Which assistive devices can help with preparing meals?

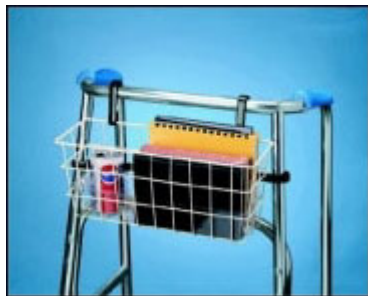
Individuals who have had a stroke may find it difficult to prepare meals. The next section will give you ideas about what assistive devices can be used to make it easier to:



- **Transport Objects:**

A kitchen trolley can be used to transport objects from the kitchen to the dining room table. This is a good product to use when you have heavy objects to carry. It makes it safer.

***! If you choose to use a trolley on wheels, remember that it is not as stable as your walking aid. Hence, make sure that you do not lean too much on it!***



Home-made or specialized bags can be attached to your kitchen trolley or walking aid. These can also be useful for carrying items from the kitchen to the dining room. You can use the bags to carry smaller, lighter objects that will not tip.

***! If you choose to attach bags to your walking aid, make sure that it is stable before using it. If you carry a lot of weight in your bag, it could make your walking aid tip over!***

- **Use of utensils:**



If you find it difficult to use utensils because one of your arms has less movement than before your stroke, several adapted utensils can be useful. You can try combined utensils such as a spoon combined with a fork or a fork with a serrated edge.



A rocker knife can help you to cut your food with one hand. The rocking motion of the knife makes it easier to cut without stabilizing the food with the other hand. You can also try a cutting board with spikes to stabilize the food while cutting.



- **Making toast:**

You can use a buttering board to make it easier to spread butter on your toast. The raised edges will keep the bread in place while you are buttering it.



- **Making hot beverages:**



You can use a kettle that turns itself off automatically to ensure safety. You can also try to use a kettle tipper. This will make it easier for you to pour the hot liquid into your cup with one hand.

*! In the beginning, pouring hot liquid with one hand can be difficult. It is recommended that you practice using the kettle tipper a few times with a kettle filled with cold water before using it with hot liquids!*

- **Other assistive devices:**

Many other assistive devices are available to help you prepare meals. For example, you can use a bowl holder to transfer food from one bowl to another. A can opener that is mounted on the wall makes it easier to open a can with one hand. Finally, you can try a grater with suction feet if you want to prepare cheese with one hand.



If you get tired while preparing meals, a perching stool with a back support can help you. It allows you to sit when you are tired. Try to find one with a back support. They are safer and they require less energy.

We did not show you all of the assistive devices for preparing meals here. There are other types of devices which can be helpful. You can ask your health care professional, ask a salesperson in an assistive devices store, or do a search on the Internet to find what else could be useful for you.





## Which assistive devices can help with eating/feeding?

First, it is important for you to maintain a good position when eating. Hence, you should sit in a chair that gives you good sitting support. If your trunk is weak and you need support, you can use pillows, an arm trough for your weaker arm, or a lap board. Good positioning will make it easier for you to swallow your food safely.

- **Use cutlery:**

If it is difficult for you to use cutlery because one of your arms is weak, you can use adapted utensils. You only need one hand to use these utensils.



- **Combined utensils:** (fork and knife, spoon and fork): so that you don't need to switch from one utensil to another. These utensils have been created for people who have one hand to use.



- **Rocking knives:** the rocking action prevents you from having to hold the food in place with the other hand. Hence, you can cut your meat or other food with one hand.

- **Adhesive placemats:** they hold the plate in place. People who have had a stroke often use only one hand when eating. Because they do not have the other hand to hold things down, the plate often moves during cutting or eating. By using a mat like the one in the picture, your plate will stay in one place.



- **Plate guards:** these can help you to get some food on your utensil without pushing it out of the plate. This is helpful for people who can not use their second hand to hold the knife.



- **Grasp objects:**

If it is difficult for you to grasp objects, you can try:



- *Utensils with built-in and longer handles:* If your hand is weak, these are easier to grasp.



- *Cups with T-shaped handles:* These are easy to hold for some individuals who have trouble gripping as you can simply put your fingers around the handle without closing your hand around it.



- *Attachable handle to add on a glass or soft drink can:* These can help you to hold a glass or a can without having to grasp it. They can be attached to any glass or can.



- *Universal cuff:* To hold the utensil in place. This makes it easier for some individuals who have difficulty to grasp to hold their utensils. It is possible to make the cuff tighter around the

hand so that the utensil will not move.

- **Drink from a glass or cup:**

The muscles that you use for drinking and swallowing might be weaker since you have had your stroke. This can cause you to have difficulties when drinking. If liquid is leaking out of your mouth when you drink, a straw might help you. You should check with your health professional if you are having difficulty drinking. There are assessments that he or she will do to see if you are having difficulty



with the muscles that are used for swallowing.

A straw holder may also make drinking easier for you as the straw is fixed into the glass and cannot fall out or move.

We did not show all assistive devices for eating here. There are other types of devices that can be helpful. You can ask your health care professional or search on the Internet using words like assistive devices for eating and adapted utensils for more information.

*Last Update: June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006*

Information on this web site is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. You should not use the information on this web site for diagnosing or treating a medical or health condition. If you have or suspect you have a medical problem, promptly contact your professional healthcare provider.