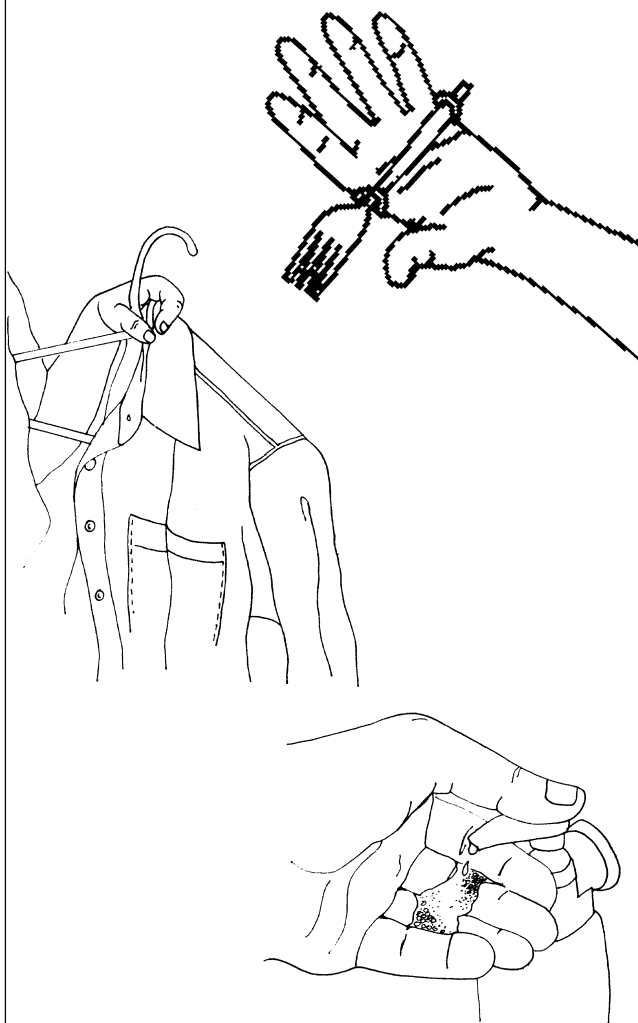


# One-Handed Living:

## A Practical Guide to Daily Activities after a Hand Injury



## Dedication

This work was inspired by the positive spirit of the authors. One of the authors sustained a severe injury to the dominant hand and found the challenges faced in accomplishing daily activities overwhelmingly frustrating. We would like to share the experience of living alone and maintaining a common sense approach to independence.

There are many excellent books for the one-handed patient with a long-term disability. These often encourage the use of expensive equipment to simplify activities. But none of them address the short-term needs of the person who is temporarily one-handed. This clearly illustrated guide is intended specifically for the person who is temporarily one-handed and is having difficulty accomplishing daily activities. The great ideas shown using special one-handed techniques and low-cost modifications really make a difference in simplifying life and increasing independence.

We hope that the ideas contained in this booklet will help you accomplish your everyday activities easily and safely. When you find solutions to your own daily challenges you may want to share these with others. We would like to help. Please forward your ideas to us:

**[karen@uetech.com](mailto:karen@uetech.com)**

**UE TECH; P.O. Box 2145;**

**Edwards, CO 81632**

**fax: 970-926-8877**

# One-Handed Living:

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## A Practical Guide to Daily Activities after a Hand Injury

By  
Maureen Hardy MS PT CHT  
Audrey Tsao MD  
Javad Tavassoli MD

Edited by Karen Schultz-Johnson  
MS OTR FAOTA CHT



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# I. Introduction

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This book is meant to help people who have injured one hand or arm. We want to give some easy and inexpensive ideas for dealing with activities of daily living. We hope that the information presented here will inspire active cooperation between the patient, therapist and anyone involved during the recovery process. Please feel free to use these ideas and expand or adjust them to make life easier during recovery.

**To The Professional Care-Giver:** Don't assume that your patients are coping well with their one-handed situation even if it is relatively short term. Addressing areas of dependence, pain, flashbacks, support systems, sleep and eating disturbances ensures an environment that meets the holistic needs of the person, not just the injured hand. Compliance with all aspects of medical and therapeutic care is enhanced by brief written and pictorial instructions given sequentially during the rehabilitation process.

**To The Injured Person:** A hand or arm injury will affect most activities of daily life. The healing process will take time and patience on your part. Allow yourself the luxury of fatigue. Don't be surprised if you need to take naps. Rest and sleep as much as you need to, especially since your sleep pattern will probably be interrupted by pain, discomfort from splints or abnormal and restricted sleeping positions. Your eating patterns may also be changed, so eat what you can but supplement with plenty of water and consider vitamins too. Everything may take twice as long to do and will require planning. Even doing ordinary things like brushing your teeth may be exhausting. Making decisions such as when to return to work may be overwhelming. Conserve your energy when possible and allow others to offer and give assistance. Your uninjured arm will be strained from doing the job of both arms or hands. Remember, your injury affects those around you and not just you.

**About Family Care-Givers:** Family and friends can be very helpful during your recovery. When they help you it will make them feel good. Children love to help, too. With an injury that leaves you temporarily with one hand but able to move around, people around you may not know what to do. Let them

know what you need them to do. You will be able to do more things by yourself later in your recovery, but now the most important thing is that you recover well. Having people help you may avoid further injury.

## II. IMPORTANT IDEAS

\* **Priority Planning:** Some things are important to do before your surgery. If you have emergency surgery consider doing them as soon as possible afterwards. Move or have someone move things in your house so that you can easily reach them. This is most important in the kitchen and bathroom. Keep cabinets uncluttered. Rearrange anything that may cause accidents or get in the way. Make sure lighting is good in all areas. Replace burned out bulbs. Be aware of what your surroundings will be during your recovery. Adjust things for your climate and weather.

\* **Keep things simple:** Simplify your lifestyle. Don't bother with things which can wait until you are better. For instance, cook less and eat out more, only buy food that is easy to prepare, grow a beard instead of shaving, or do a wash and wear hair style.

\* **If it works, use it:** This booklet may give you some useful ideas. Looking at a catalog of helpful tools and household gadgets may also help. Make whatever changes you need to simplify your life.

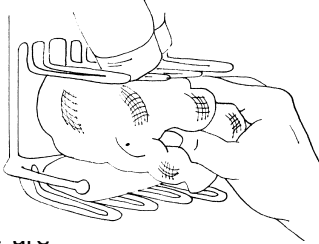
\* **Ask for help:** Sometimes you will need to ask for help. Family, friends and coworkers are usually willing to help. Children love to help. Giving people a chance to help will make them feel useful. Learn your limits; don't try to do everything by yourself.

\* **Consider effects caused by your injury:** During your recovery process, you will be easily fatigued and your sleep may be disturbed. Medications may affect your balance, appetite and ability to concentrate. Your uninjured hand is your main protection against falling. Coordination and balance change when you have only one hand to use. If you wear a bulky splint on your injured hand or if you need to keep it elevated, your hand may limit your field of vision.

\* **Make time for your therapy:** Your top priority should be your hand and its recovery. You may not be able to remember all of your instructions. Use written directions and pictures to help you.

### III. Bathroom/Grooming

Remember to give yourself extra time. For your safety, it is important not to rush. It is easy to slip and fall in the bathroom especially when surfaces become wet. Rubber backed rugs can be used on slick floors to keep you from slipping. Have someone move things to where you can reach them. Have someone put all liquids into squeeze bottles since these are

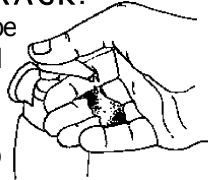


easier to use with one hand. If you have a problem don't try using a spray. Doing so can make your bathroom safer and easier to use.



\* Put bottles, soap, and other things into a **HANGING SHOWER RACK**.

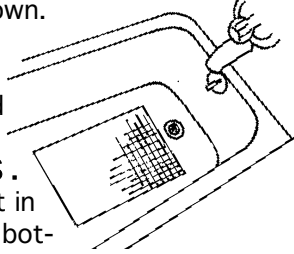
The bath cloth or net wash ball can be then easily rubbed over a captured bar of soap.



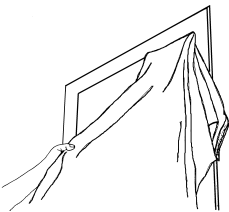
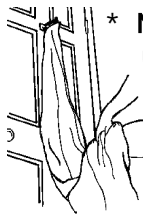
\* Use a **GARBAGE BAG** to keep your hand or arm dry when in the shower. Place the garbage bag over your hand, twist the bag to let out the air and place masking tape below your injury or splint. It does not have to be tight. Just hold your hand up and let the water drip down.



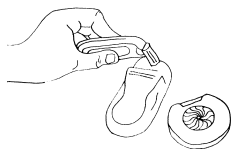
\* Use shampoos, conditioners, and other liquids in **SQUEEZE BOTTLES with FLIP TOPS**. **LIQUID SOAP** can be bought in pump dispensers or squeeze bottles.



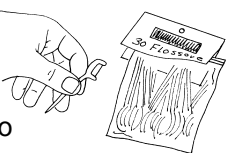
\* **NET WASH BALLS** may be used for bathing and are easily rinsed, squeezed, and kept clean with one hand. These are also available on longer handles.



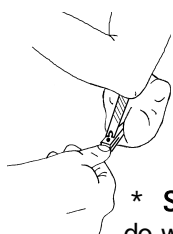
\* **RUBBER MATS** or non-slip rubber adhesive patterns can be placed to avoid slipping in the tub or shower.



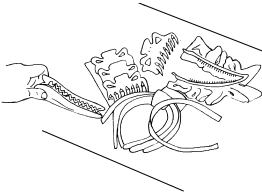
\* **DRYING** can be done by placing the towel on a door hook or over the door. Close the door onto the towel to hold it in place. Use your uninjured hand to towel off with.



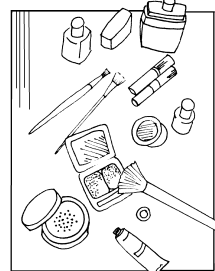
\* **TOOTHPASTE** is easier to use with a pump dispenser or flip top. A full tube of toothpaste is easier to hold, open and use one handed.



\* **SHAVING** may be done with a wide handle shaver, which is easier to hold. With an electric shaver, use a pre-shave lotion to lubricate your skin.

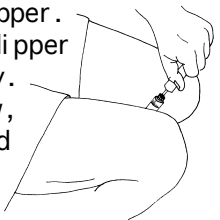


\* **FLOSSING** is best done with a dental floss tool designed for one-handed use.



\* To accomplish **NAIL CUTTING** on your uninjured hand, you will need stiff exercise putty (get this from your therapist or doctor) and a toenail clipper.

Press the nail clipper into the putty. Use your elbow, forearm, or hand on your injured side to push on the clipper.



\* **HAIR** can be dried with a towel



or a hair dryer more easily by bending forward. Hair bands or clips may be easier to hold hair back.

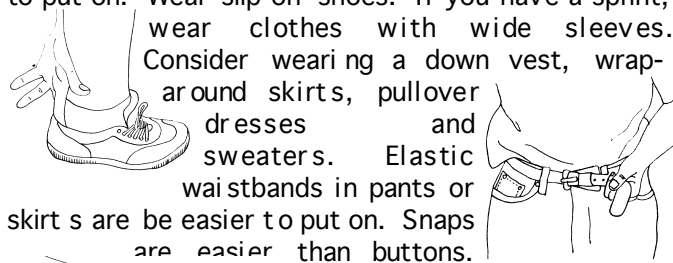
\* Put your **MAKE-UP** on top of a paper towel or tissue to keep it from slipping. Wet the corners of the paper towel to keep it from sliding. Gripliner (rubber shelf liner) can also be used for the same thing. For small make-up that will not spill (mascara), put it on its side and step on it with your bare foot while you open it with your uninjured hand. For bigger make-up, sit down and put it between your knees so you can open it with your hand.

## IV. Dressing

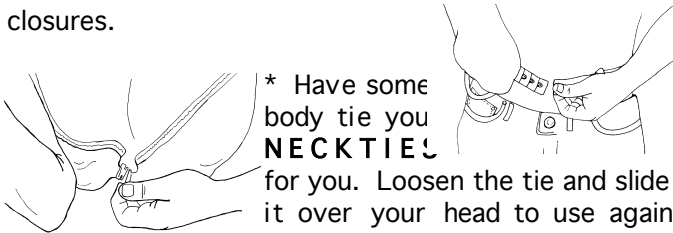


Give yourself extra time to dress. Sit down to dress in necessary.

sary. Put your socks on first before your pants. Wear clothes that are easy to put on. Wear slip-on shoes. If you have a splint, wear clothes with wide sleeves. Consider wearing a down vest, wrap-around skirts, pullover dresses and sweaters. Elastic waistbands in pants or skirts are easier to put on. Snaps are easier than buttons.



are easier than hooks. Avoid zippers if possible. Replace fasteners for clothing and shoes with Velcro® closures or buy clothes and shoes with Velcro® closures.



\* Have some body tie you **NECKTIES** for you. Loosen the tie and slide it over your head to use again another day.

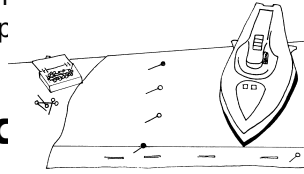
\* Use loop or clip-on **EARRINGS**. Avoid posts!

\* **SHOE LACES**. Pre-tied elastic shoelaces will let you get your foot into the tied shoe while keeping enough tension to stay on.

\* Put your **BELT** on so that the buckle is on the side of your *injured* hand. Use your uninjured hand to tighten the belt and close it.

\* To keep your **HAND WARM** while wearing a splint in cold weather, place a leg warmer or polar fleece Splint N Cast™ mitt over your splint.

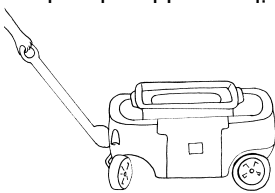
\* **BRAS** may be more easily fastened in front and turned around. Front fastening bras may also be easier. Loose, pull-on styles also be an option.



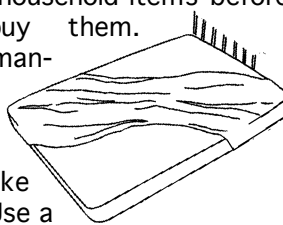
## V. Household Chores



Rest in between chores. Some chores may be more fatiguing than others. Think of things that can wait. When you let them help. Be sure you can use household items before you buy them.



Buy manageable sizes, avoiding those that are too heavy or bulky. Take clothes to the dry cleaners. Use a push broom for sweeping. A dust mop with a swivel head may be used for cleaning in high places to avoid use of step ladders. Use a wide stable footstool if you have to reach any-



thing high. Use garbage cans that have wheels. Consider putting laundry into separate laundry baskets so you don't have to sort it later. Be sure the containers are light and compact enough to move by yourself.

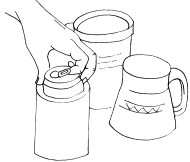
\* Use dressmaker pins to hold clothes while **IRONING**.

\* To **HANG CLOTHES**, put your hand through the collar, grab the hanger and pull it through.

\* Buy left-handed **SCISSORS** if your right hand is injured.

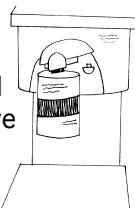
\* Use a **WAGON** to move things around the house (laundry, cleaning products).

\* When **MAKING THE BED**, put fitted sheets on at diagonal corners. If you have flat sheets, try them with fitted sheets, trying flat sheets on the bottom and the top.



use.

Buy or put **CLEANING FLUIDS** in pump-type spray bottles for easier use.

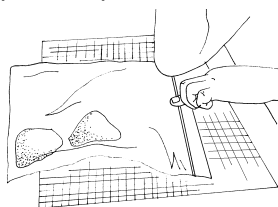
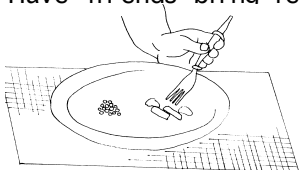
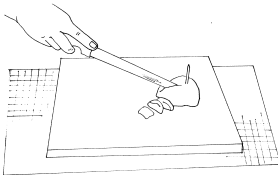


## VI. Kitchen

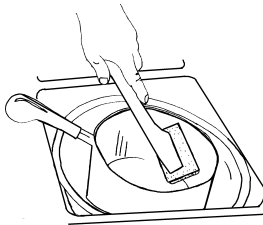
Give yourself a break; cook only if you need to. Eat out or order in frequently in the early part of your recovery.

Have friends bring reheatable food that does not require cutting. Have someone give things to where you can reach them easily. Have someone loosen all jars and containers for you. Use paper plates, plastic forks,

paper cups, etc. to make cleaning easier. Sharp knives cut more easily, but be careful. Partially frozen food may be easier to cut than completely thawed food. A large carving fork or barbeque fork has



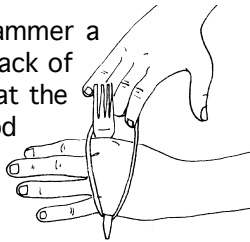
longer handles which can be lean to help in cutting items. Pour liquids carefully. Fill pots with water after they are placed onto the stove because carrying filled pots from the sink can be difficult. Have someone wash, cut and store food in Ziploc® bags when you bring items home from the grocery store.



\* Buy a **CAN OPENER** that can be mounted. Find one that has a magnet to hold both the can and the lid.

\* Use **INSULATED FOAM HOLDERS** with glasses and cans or use motion mugs. They are easier to grip and less prone to spill.

\* Have someone hammer a stainless steel nail through the back of a wood **CUTTING BOARD** so that the nail head can be used to hold food



in place while cutting.



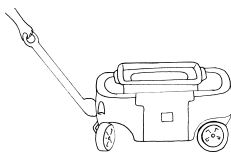
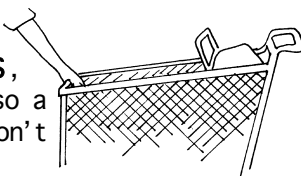
\* **TO KEEP CUTTING BOARD, PLATES AND BOWLS FROM SLIPPING**, place a gripliner (rubber shelf liner) under them.

\* Use paper towels **TO CLEAN SURFACES and OBJECTS** so you do not have to squeeze a rag or cloth.

\* Ziploc® bags are good for **FOOD STORAGE**. The large size is easier to open and close with one hand.

\* Use square Tupperware® containers that are easier to open and close than bowl shaped ones.

\* When **WASHING DISHES**, use a scrub brush that is also a soap dispenser so you don't have to rinse a dish cloth.

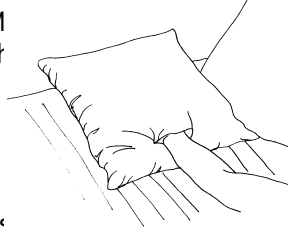


You can use a gripliner (rubber shelf liner) underneath a bowl or pot to help stabilize it for **MIXING** or **WASHING**. Another way to

stabilize a pot or bowl for washing or mixing is to place it inside a larger pot that fits snugly inside the sink.

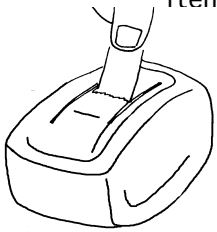
\* **OPENING JARS** can be done with a jar opening device. You can also hold the jar between your feet or knees and open the jar with your uninjured hand. A rubber gripper may help you hold the jar. Running lids under hot water may help in loosening lids.

\* Check with your physician or therapist before trying this idea. Use a rubber band to stabilize a **FORK, SPOON** or **KNIFE** in your hand. Put the utensil on a flat surface and put your hand on top of it. Secure with rubber band as shown. Make sure the rubber band is not too tight and is safe for your hand.



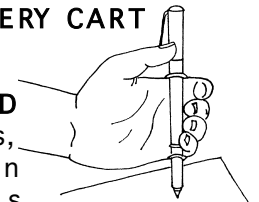
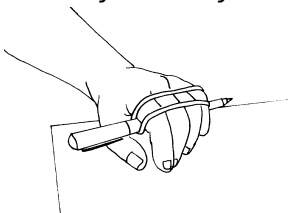
## VII. Shopping

Make frequent trips to the store. Have the store clerk bag your food in the produce section. Keep a shopping list and have others pick up items for you when they offer. Try choosing products without preservatives, preservative-free products, and preservative-free products. Eat out or order take-out more frequently during the early part of your recovery.



\* Pull your **GROCERY CART** with one hand from the front.

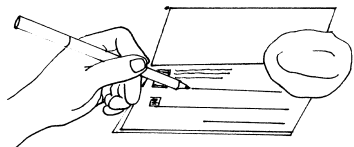
\* Buy easily accessible **PREPARED** foods, such as frozen foods, pre-cut fruits and vegetables, yogurt, deli foods, etc.



\* Use a **WAGON** to move your car to the house.

## VIII. GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Driving requires special consideration. Remember that you will need more time. Be patient.







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Customer Signature Expiration Date

# One-Handed Living:

## A Practical Guide to Daily Activities after a Hand Injury

There are many excellent books for the one-handed patient with a long-term disability. These often encourage the use of expensive equipment to simplify activities. But none of them address the short-term needs of the person who is temporarily one-handed. This clearly illustrated guide is intended specifically for the person who is temporarily one-handed and is having difficulty accomplishing daily activities. The great ideas shown using special one-handed techniques and low-cost modifications really make a difference in simplifying life and increasing independence.

The frustrations and obstacles of one-handed living after a hand injury were the inspiration for writing this easy-to-read, comprehensive guide. This practical booklet, written by a patient, a surgeon who sustained a hand injury, and her therapist gives a hands-on approach to managing the many challenges of one-handed living faced daily.

So many of the activities we take for granted become overwhelming obstacles when they are approached with just one hand. With the use of only one hand,

- |                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| § take a shower?              | § tie?                    |
| § brush and floss your teeth? | § put on a belt?          |
| § cut your nails?             | § change your bed sheets? |
| § put on your make-up?        | § hang your clothes?      |
| § put on a neck-              |                           |

how do you:

Learn practical, simple solutions to everyday problems. The ideas in this booklet will help to minimize the frustrations encountered when trying

**Compliments of:**