Self-care Using One Hand

For the Upper Body

General tips

- Find methods to save your energy: Sit to work, if you need to. Make a list of activities for the day. Give yourself enough time to complete each task. Schedule rest breaks.

- Use your body to keep objects stable. For example, place a jar between your legs. Use your good arm to unscrew the lid.

- Place objects on a non-slip surface. For example, a rubber mat keeps items from sliding on a counter.

- When you handle small objects, use all the fingers of your hand. For example, place your keys in the palm of your hand. Use your thumb to separate the keys.

- You may need special equipment to help you do tasks with one hand. Your OT (occupational therapist) can help with your specific needs.

Tips for grooming and bathing

- Keep items within easy reach, both on the counter and in the shower. Use shelves and bath organizers.

- Use items that are easy to open: liquid soap, spray deodorant, and toothpaste with a flip-top.

- Use an electric toothbrush or razor.

- Use a denture brush or nail brush with suction cups.

- Try using a slip-on wash mitt. A long-handed bath sponge may help you reach all parts of your body.

Tips for dressing

- Pullover shirts are easier than shirts with buttons.

- Wear clothes that are easy to fasten or that fasten in front. Replace buttons and clasps with Velcro.

- If you wear a bra, choose bras that pull over your head (sports bras) or fasten in front. If you use a bra that hooks in the back, your therapist can show you how to put it on.

- Sit in a straight-backed chair. Place your clothes within reach, in the order you will put them on.

- If you had arm surgery, only move your arm as directed by your doctor.

continued
**Pullover shirts**

1. **Dress the weak arm first.** Place the shirt face-down on your lap. The neck should open at your knees.

2. Gather up the clothing to expose the armhole. Place the weak arm through the sleeve.

3. Place your good arm through the other sleeve.

4. Before putting the shirt over your head, make sure both sleeves are pushed up over your elbows.

5. Gather the shirt from hemline to collar. Duck your head and pull the shirt over your head.

6. To take off the shirt, **undress your good arm first.**

**Buttoned shirts and jackets**

1. **Dress the weak arm first.** Open the shirt and place it on your lap. The inside should face up with the tag showing. The neck should open at your knees.

2. Lift your weak arm and place it into the armhole.

3. Pull the armhole well above your elbow. Pull the shirt onto the shoulder.

4. Bring the rest of the shirt around your back: Throw it over the shoulder, or reach for it behind your neck.

5. Put your good arm through the sleeve.

6. Line up the front edges of the shirt. Start buttoning from the bottom and work upward.

7. To take off the shirt, **undress your good arm first.**

**Putting on a Pullover**

1. **Step 1**
2. **Step 2**
3. **Step 3**
4. **Step 4**