

Living with Arthritis #2

(Bathroom, Dressing, Grooming, Medication Management and Bedroom/Lounge)

Arthritis may cause difficulties with many daily activities including domestic tasks, eating and drinking, personal hygiene, general mobility within the home and community, employment tasks, driving and recreation activities. There are numerous ways to manage arthritis such as medication, diet, exercise, and joint protection techniques. It is also useful to consider any gadgets that may make tasks easier, and may enable participation in your chosen roles and activities.



BATHROOM

A bath board may be helpful for people who have difficulty getting in and out of the bath. The bath board is fitted across the top of the bath and eliminates the need to step into the bath. Bath boards come in various models with padded seats, backrests, or swivel seats. A height adjustable tub transfer bench may be useful if it is difficult to stand up from the bath.

If a person wishes to be submerged in the bath to relax, a bath seat could be used in conjunction with a bath board. The person can then use this equipment to lower themselves, in a seated position, to the floor of the bath. A bath hoist may be required if the person is unable to use a bath seat.



A hand-held shower will help a person with reaching difficult areas when bathing on a bath board or transfer bench.

A height-adjustable shower chair or stool may be a good idea for people who are unsteady on their feet, or who fatigue quickly when showering. A mobile shower chair could be used in a level access shower recess.



Grab rails and non-slip products, such as non-slip mats, non-slip tread, and chemical treatments, are also good for increasing general safety in the shower.

WASHING/DRESSING/GROOMING

For people with limited hand function, a soap mitt may assist them with washing. A terry towelling robe or towel with loops sewn to each end may assist people with limited upper limb movement to dry themselves.

For people who have difficulty reaching their feet and back, long handled aids such as toe washers and sponges may be useful.

If you have difficulty washing your hair, consider a portable basin or the 'Beauty Hair Washer' which is a long handle aid to massage the head.

Long handled combs and brushes enable you to brush your hair even if you have limited arm and shoulder movement. There are also toe nail scissors with extra long handles.

Lightweight and large handles make tools easier to grasp when you have weak hands, such as built-up handle tooth brushes.



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Mounting equipment, such as hair dryers and toothpaste dispensers, can make their use easier for people with limited upper limb function. Lightweight items can be mounted with suction caps. These include nail clippers, emery boards, nail brushes, and denture brushes.

MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

It can often be difficult to open and operate medication dispensers. An eye drop dispenser could eliminate the difficulties with squeezing a small bottle.

Think about having your local pharmacy prepare a Webster pack, which will make taking your daily tablets easier. All the tablets required at that time of the day are stored in the same blister section, so you will only need to open one. A 'Pil-Bob' device can help to open the blister and collect the tablets.



BEDROOM/LOUNGE

Difficulty getting in and out of bed, may be reduced for a person by raising the height of the bed using bed raisers. Numerous aids may also assist people to move from a lying to sitting position, including backrests, electrical backrest risers, bed ladders, bed sticks/rails, and self help poles.

If a person has problems moving around in the bed, slide sheet can assist. They provide a slippery surface, which allows the person to turn more easily.

A leg lifter may be of assistance for those who have problems lifting their legs into bed due to reduced lower limb movement and strength.



If the individual is finding it difficult to get comfortable in bed due to painful and swollen joints, a foam mattress or lambs wool products (such as elbow and heel protectors) may improve comfort. Just remember if there are pressure risks, foam overlays only provide relief for those at low risk. You should seek advice from a health professional before purchasing pressure relieving products.

Getting on and off a lounge chair can be difficult if you have decreased strength in your lower and upper limbs. If the chair is too low consider using chair raisers. Alternatively, a high backed armchair with armrests and height-adjustable legs may assist. A person with arthritis can also consider an electric lift and recline chair for comfort and ease of altering positions.

NEED TO KNOW MORE?

Telephone, fax or e-mail your enquiry to obtain further information from one of the therapists about products. Alternatively, you can make an appointment to trial the equipment at our display centres or through our outreach service. Please phone LifeTec for further details.

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