



## Information Sheet

### Dressing: aids and equipment

If dressing is difficult, it may be worth trying different dressing techniques, making adaptations to clothing or using assistive technology to help dress and undress independently.



#### Dressing techniques

At the Independent Living Centre we can demonstrate a range of dressing techniques depending on each person's needs and abilities.

For someone who has the functional use of one hand, there are one-handed dressing methods for lacing up and tying shoe laces, putting on a bra, shirt, cardigan, sweater, jumper, socks, knee-high stockings and knotting a tie.

There is also information on how to put on a shirt if hands are weak, putting on trousers when one side is paralysed, and dressing/undressing with limited or painful shoulder movement, including suggestions for how to put on a heavy coat.

#### Adapted clothing

- ▶ Skirts and trousers with elastic waistbands are easier to manage than those with fasteners.
- ▶ Clothing without fasteners, like T-shirts, eliminates the need to deal with buttons or zips.
- ▶ If fasteners are necessary, hook and loop fastenings such as velcro are often easier to manage. A pair of trousers may have the appearance of a fly at the front, but the actual method of opening might be a velcro fastening at the sides.
- ▶ To maintain the appearance of a buttoned up shirt, buttons can be sewn on top of the sewn up buttonholes and then velcro used underneath to actually fasten the shirt.
- ▶ Two buttons can also be sewn together with elastic to make expanding cuff links.
- ▶ Clothing that opens at the back may make it easier to manage when toileting.
- ▶ Some companies specialise in manufacturing adapted clothing or can modify existing items on request.

## Assistive technology/equipment to aid dressing

### Buttonhooks

A buttonhook can be used to do up buttons by pushing the hook through the buttonhole, looping over the button and pulling it back through the hole.

Some buttonhooks are available with larger handles to assist those with weak grasp

### Dressing sticks

A dressing stick usually features a hook at one end and sometimes a thimble on the other end. It has a range of uses including pushing sleeves off shoulders and pulling up pants. Loops can be sewn onto clothing and the dressing stick used to hook into the loops and pull up and position the garment.

### Zips

Large rings or tape can be attached to the zip to assist grasp. A dressing stick can be used to hook into zip rings that are difficult to reach. Another option is to replace the zip with a velcro fastening.

### Shoes

- ▶ Long-handled shoehorns may assist with putting on shoes and eliminate the need to bend down. There is a pickup reacher that has a plastic shoehorn attached to one end; this can assist in both putting shoes on and pulling up socks.
- ▶ If shoelace tying is difficult, elastic shoelaces or coil (spring) laces enable the shoe to be slipped on and off without tying and untying.
- ▶ Cord and barrel locks can also be used as a securing and tightening device.
- ▶ Shoe buttons are made of plastic and screw through the top pair of lace holes in a lace up shoe. A tied shoelace can then be pulled over the button to fasten, reducing the number of times the shoelace has to be tied and untied.
- ▶ Another easy shoe option is to consider slip on shoes or those that fasten with velcro.
- ▶ Ortholace is a velcro attachment which can be applied to lace up shoes. It allows one-handed adjustment of laces by pulling across the Velcro mechanism to tighten up the laces and shoe.
- ▶ Customised shoes can be made with easier to manage fasteners and are designed to open more fully to assist with placing the foot into the shoe.
- ▶ To assist with removing boots or shoes a Boot Jack might be of assistance. It features a curved cut out area at one end to accommodate the heel of the shoe or boot while the other foot is placed on the other end to hold it stable, while the boot is pulled off.
- ▶ If putting on slippers is an issue, there are medical sheepskin slippers available with a wide opening tongue that fastens with velcro. Some designs open up totally flat and then fasten around the heel and across the top of the foot with a wide velcro strip. Some feature a rubber non-slip sole.

## **Socks, stockings and pantyhose**

- ▶ Aids are available to assist in putting on socks, stockings and pantyhose when it is difficult to bend down and reach them.
- ▶ These aids are generally made of flexible plastic that are bent into a gutter shape. The sock or stocking is pulled onto the plastic and there are cotton tapes that are held while the aid with the sock is lowered to the floor. The tapes are pulled upwards and the sock slides onto the foot as the aid is pulled out of the sock.
- ▶ Some techniques that may assist in reaching feet to put socks on include sitting down and placing the foot on a low stool, or crossing legs so that the calf of one leg is resting on the knee of the other leg.

## **Compression stockings**

- ▶ Compression stockings can be particularly difficult to apply because of the strong elasticity of the stocking, difficulty reaching down to the end of the foot and possible increased size of the foot and leg due to swelling.
- ▶ A variety of compression stocking aids are available to assist in putting on compression stockings, including options for both open toe or closed toe stockings.
- ▶ To remove compression stockings there is a long-handled device that has an end like a small shoehorn that slides along the leg with a hook that hooks over the stocking edge and slides it down.
- ▶ Other tips that may make putting on compression stockings a bit simpler include; wearing rubber gloves to improve grip and avoid piercing the stockings, and using a footstool with a non-slip mat on it to bring the foot closer to reach.

## **Bras**

- ▶ If a bra is very difficult to fasten at the back, consider purchasing a front opening bra.
- ▶ If the hook and eye fastenings are too small and difficult to manage a bra can be altered to have a front opening where velcro is threaded through a 'D ring' and pulled back on itself.
- ▶ Another option is to purchase a 'fastener free bra', which involves pulling the bra on from over the head or stepping into it and pulling it up into position.
- ▶ An aid is available which aims to assist with putting on a bra one-handed. It secures one side of the bra at the front while the other side of the bra is attached to it.

## Contacting the Independent Living Centre

For further information or to make an appointment to visit the display please contact the Independent Living Centre. The Independent Living Centre offers free advice on equipment and techniques to help you with everyday tasks.

Independent Living Centre  
11 Blacks Road  
Gilles Plains SA 5086

Phone: 1300 885 886 (SA & NT callers only) or 8266 5260

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Email: [ilcsa@dfc.sa.gov.au](mailto:ilcsa@dfc.sa.gov.au)

Website: [www.sa.gov.au/disability/ilc](http://www.sa.gov.au/disability/ilc)

Accessible off street parking is available.

Bus routes:

From the city T500/T501 or  
207/208 to Stop 28 Sudholz Road

Timetable information: 8210 1000

