

Personal Care: looking after yourself

Personal care includes activities such as showering, bathing, grooming, dressing, managing medications and other general hygiene tasks. Maintaining personal care can sometimes be difficult for reasons including:

- Pain and difficulty bending and reaching different parts of the body while showering, bathing and dressing.
- Difficulty gripping and holding various items for personal care, such as sponges, soap, hairdryers and toothbrushes.
- Pain, discomfort and fatigue caused by activities that require repetitive movements, such as brushing teeth.
- Difficulty balancing and stabilising when standing to complete tasks.



Assistive technology and techniques for personal care

Products and techniques available to assist with personal care tasks include:

Dressing

- Replacing buttons with a cuff extender or hook and loop fastening may eliminate the need to button/unbutton cuffs and collars. Alternatively, a button hook can be used to grasp a button and pull it through the button hole.
- Attaching a larger ring or tape through the hole in the head of the zip can make it easier to grasp and use. Another option is to use a large-handled hook to catch the zip head and pull the zip open and closed.
- If shoelaces are a problem, you may wish to consider stretchy elastic and coil shoelaces that remain permanently tied up. 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 shoelace hole. 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.
- Shoehorns assist with putting on and pulling off shoes. Some models come with a gripper or clamp which helps to pull socks on and off.
- If these alternatives are still difficult to manage, consider slip-on shoes or shoes with hook and loop tape openings. Many come with a non-slip rubber sole for good grip to help walk and stand safely.
- Dressing sticks, along with sock and stocking aids, may assist when flexibility and reach is limited. Specialised aids are available for compression stockings.

- One handed methods can also be used to tie shoelaces and put on shirts, pants, stockings and bras.
- Dressing can also be made easier with adaptive clothing, underwear and sleepwear with hook and loop tape fastenings, cross-over backs, elastic side/front or back openings, loose fit and widened armholes. Specialised companies manufacture or modify clothing to suit individual needs.

Mouth and nail care

- Nail brushes attached to suction cups can be useful for stabilising the brush for cleaning nails with one hand.
- Nail clippers and/or filers that secure onto a plastic block with suction cups can also help to stabilise the equipment for use.
- Long-handled nail scissors are available if bending and reaching is difficult.
- An electric or battery operated toothbrush can make teeth cleaning easier, eliminating repetitive brushing movements.
- Large handles can be attached to a toothbrush or nail file to assist with grip.
- Suction cup denture brushes are available for cleaning dentures with one hand.
- A tooth floss holder can assist those who have difficulty gripping tooth floss. These devices enable one-handed flossing.
- Squeezing devices can be attached to toothpaste tubes to push out the paste.
- Changing the way that the task is performed such as sitting rather than standing to cut toenails or brush teeth may make the activity easier.

Bathing and showering

- Soap-on-a-rope and soap bags/wash mittens with a pocket to hold soap decrease the risk of dropping slippery soap while bathing.
- A sensor pump for dispensing soap, shampoo and conditioner or lotions may be helpful.
- Long-handled sponges and toe washers can be used to wash and dry between toes, eliminating bending.
- Bristle pads with suction cups on the base can be stuck to the floor in the shower, to assist with cleaning feet.
- Shampoo basins can be used for washing hair outside of the shower or bath in a sitting or lying position. You may wish to try dry-use shampoo that doesn't need to be washed out of the hair.
- If showering and bathing in the bathroom is challenging, disposable body wipes are another option.
- Consider long-handled hair washing aids to assist with lathering shampoo or conditioner if reaching is difficult.
- Shower chairs and stools designed to reduce the risk of slipping while showering can also be used for sitting whilst drying and getting dressed.
- Consider putting on a dressing gown after showering to absorb the water on your body.

Toileting

- Bottom wipers are available to assist with reaching and gripping toilet paper. Models include tong-like aids or long handles with heads to wrap the paper around. A bidet may also be a suitable option to consider.
- Toileting alternatives include bedside commode chairs, bedpans or urinals. Spill-proof urinals are available.
- Disposable and reusable devices are available to assist women to urinate in a standing position if sitting on a toilet is difficult.

Medication management

- Pill splitters and crushers assist in splitting tablets for half-dosages or crushing tablets into power-form.
- Medication dosage packets and boxes can assist with organising and managing medication. Some types have a reminder alarm that sounds during the day.
- Webster Paks contain small blisters holding tablets for one week. The tablets are arranged into dosages under columns relating to days and times of the day. They can be re-filled by a pharmacist.
- Devices are available to assist with removing tablets from blister packs. A Pil-Bob is specifically designed for use with a Webster Pak.
- The Fun Haler is a small plastic volume spacer to use with metered dose inhalers. Designed for children, it features a whistle and spinner to make inhaling a less stressful experience whilst promoting use of a correct inhaling technique.
- The Haileraid plastic device fits over pump inhalers and acts as a lever to assist if pressing the inhaler button down is difficult.
- A range of medication bottle openers is available to assist with gripping and turning medication bottle tops.
- The easy reach lotion and cream applicator uses a sponge on an extended handle to eliminate the reach required to apply ointments.
- Plastic devices are available to hold the eye open when administering eye drops.

Grooming:

Other assistive technology and techniques to assist with personal care tasks include:

- Long-handled hairbrushes and combs for when reaching is difficult.
- Mirrors with magnified lenses for decreased vision and monitoring of skin condition in hard-to-reach places. Some models include a light for increased visibility while others incorporate pivots and flexible handles for observing hard-to-view places.
- Long-handled pumice stones assist with foot care to exfoliate, smooth and buff the feet whilst eliminating bending.
- A long-handled razor holder assists with gripping a shaver for the legs and reduces the need to reach and bend.

- Hair dryer holders are available to assist if gripping a hair dryer and maintaining the strength to hold a hair dryer up is difficult or painful.
- You may wish to employ outside grooming services for cutting nails, trimming beard, waxing legs, and cutting or styling hair.

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

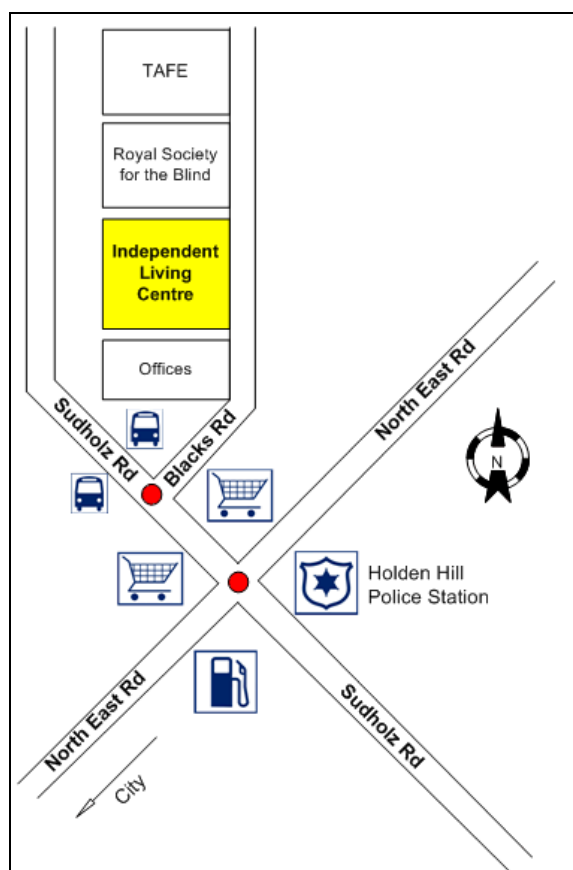
Phone: 1300 885 886 (SA & NT callers only) or 8266 5260

Email: ilcsa@dcsi.sa.gov.au

Website: www.sa.gov.au/disability/ilc

Accessible off street parking is available.

Bus services run nearby. Call 8210 1000 for timetable information.



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