

Hints and tips to make getting dressed easier

Getting dressed is an everyday personal task that we all do. Over time, due to shoulder, wrist and joint pain it may become difficult. Breathlessness, causing loss of stamina or simple lack of strength can also make dressing difficult. Adapting the way you dress will allow you to continue dressing on your own.

Keep active

- > It's never too late to start. "Use it or lose it" is a mantra you may have heard.
- > The strength of your muscles and balance is essential.
- > Simple exercises whilst sat or standing first thing in the morning will reduce stiffness in all your joints, making it easier to move and get dressed.

Preparation

- > Gather all your items together so they are within arm's reach and pace yourself while dressing.
- > When getting dressed, it is best to put your weakest arm into the garment first.
- > It is not a race, take your time.

Practical tips that may help

- > Look at what clothes you find difficult to put on and ask yourself why they are difficult? Is it buttons? Zips? Weight? Too tight or too big?
- > If you have difficulty undoing/doing up buttons leave them buttoned so you can slip the garment on over your head. Consider wearing garments that do not have buttons.
- > Replace buttons with Velcro, poppers or magnetic catches.
- > If you find that a garment is tight, then consider wearing a larger size.
- > If you have difficulty pulling up zips, you could attach a loop to make it easier to zip.
- > The lighter the jacket and coat, the easier they are to put on.
- > If you have difficulty fastening your bra, try fastening it with the fasteners at the front, then move it round into the correct position before putting your arms through the shoulder straps. Reverse these steps when you need to take your bra off.
- > For coats/jackets/cardigans etc, you may find them easier to put on if you place the inside facing out on a chair back. When you sit down you can slip your arms in the sleeves and pull it up over your shoulders.

Further help

- > Seek the help of physiotherapists. They will assess you and set a personalised exercise programme to help you with balance and strengthening of muscles.

- > If you would like further advice with a particular problem with dressing, your local Independent Living Centre may be able to help.
- > If you are struggling to put on garments, you could always ask a friend or relative to help you modify your clothes.