

Guidance for Caring for the Arm and Hand

Neurology Department

After a stroke, changes to arm movement and function are common.

For example, changes to:

- Strength and movement
- Awareness and attention towards arm
- Sensation/feeling
- Co-ordination and dexterity

You can care for your arm effectively by looking at the following:



Positioning – make sure that your arm is well supported in bed and in your chair. You may ‘forget’ about your affected arm, or it may fall by your side – make sure it stays in view on your lap or on the table, for example. Using pillows is often helpful. If you have been provided with a splint or sling, use this as directed by your therapists. You may find it easier to move or use your arm or hand when it is well supported.



Attention – Give your arm and your affected side as much attention as you can. Having things like the window, the television or your visitors on your affected side can help you to increase awareness to that side of your body. Keeping your arm in view can help with this.



Tasks - Involve the affected arm and hand in tasks as much as possible! You may find that your stronger arm is taking over and trying to do everything. This can lead to “learned non-use”. Try to use both hands for tasks or your affected arm only, if you can. Practicing as often as possible is very important. Tasks could include getting washed and dressed, eating and drinking, using cutlery, brushing your hair, holding your mobile phone, etc.



Exercises - If you have been given exercises by your therapists, it is extremely important that you do these frequently, including practicing on your own. This is essential to achieve your goals. If you need assistance, the therapy team can help, including demonstrating to family or carers.



Sensory input – If the sensation/feeling in your hand or arm has changed since your stroke, it is especially important to do sensory work. This can include washing your hand/arm, applying hand cream and massaging your hand/arm, or using different textures on your skin such as a rough towel or a soft scarf.



If you have any questions, please ask the physiotherapists or occupational therapists on the ward who can give further advice and guidance. Relatives or carers can leave a message & phone number with ward staff if needed on evenings/weekends.

**“This document is available in Welsh /
Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**