

FACT SHEET

Adaptive devices for personal grooming:

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A common issue associated with ageing and disability is difficulty reaching items, or reaching items outside of your base of support due to changes in flexibility, balance and motor function. This can result in difficulty reaching parts of your body to complete grooming or cleaning tasks or difficulty reaching items on shelves, or low or on the ground. These changes may mean that performing these everyday tasks that many take for granted, become frustrating and time consuming to complete.

There are many adaptive devices to assist you with some of the everyday tasks that you may find difficult to complete. In some cases these adaptive devices are simple tools to help overcome or compensate for a decrease in physical movement, mobility, flexibility or strength.

To assist with these tasks, there are a large range of long handled items to assist with compensating for this reduced ability to reach. There is a host of long handled equipment to assist with personal care tasks, some examples are long handled combs to brush your hair, long handled sponges to assist with washing parts of your back or feet that may be difficult to wash safely.

Easy reachers are quite commonplace and come in a variety of different styles and lengths to assist with reaching items that you may no longer be able to reach. This may allow you to now pick up small items that for example may have fallen to the ground and you cannot pick up.

If you have decreased grip strength, e.g. due to arthritis or a loss of motor- function due to stroke or other neurological conditions, there are items available to assist you to complete daily tasks as well.

Most of these items involve using a built up handle to compensate for the reduced grip strength and a holder to hold the item being used. This allows you to perform tasks such as shaving, brushing your teeth or feeding yourself. This equipment may require you to modify your cutlery to allow you to complete the task you are trying to perform. It is important to be assessed by an Occupational Therapist to determine which handles are required and how the cutlery may need to be modified to allow you to maximise your functional task performance.

Additionally, people with decreased functional use of their hands often use palmar bands, which is a strap held tight on the palm and secured with Velcro. This palmar band/strap has a pouch which allows items such as pens, typing sticks or cutlery to be placed in them to allow the user to perform functional tasks such as writing, typing and eating. There is even a variation of this that has been designed to hold electric toothbrushes and electric shavers.

For further information:

BrightSky has a range of adaptive devices in the ETAC range. See: www.brightsky.com.au or call 1300 88 66 01.

The Independent Living Centre has a wide range of devices on display. See: www.ilcnsw.asn.au