Managing and Protecting the Hemiplegic Arm/Hand After Brain Injury

After a brain injury, an arm and/or hand may become hemiplegic, meaning you are not able to move them as you once did. You may find your arm/hand to be very weak or feel very tight. You may be able to move your arm and hand quite well, only a little, or not at all. All of this depends on how your brain was affected.

During recovery, it is very important that you take care of your arm and hand. If your arm/hand is not moved or placed carefully, it can lead to pain and limit your ability to use your arm/hand.

It is important that all team members, including your family, are aware of this – and that you understand this information. That way, you can remind your care team and family how to handle your arm and hand if you have any concerns.

• **Do not** force painful movement when stretching or moving the arm/hand.

• **Do not** raise the arm higher than shoulder level without careful attention to the shoulder – the arm/hand should be in the “thumbs up” position.

• **Always** know where your arm is placed.
  If you are not able to feel your arm or hand, you must look for it.

Helpers should be aware of the following:

• **Never** pull on the affected arm when helping the person to change position, roll over or sit up.

• **Do not** hold on to the affected arm to support the person when sitting, standing or walking.

• **Do not** lift or help to move the person by placing your arms under his or her arms.

• **Support** the arm at the hand and the shoulder areas when helping the person to wash, put on deodorant and get dressed.

• Other recommendations:

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The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.