

Resource 1

Hand contractures

Hand contractures are commonly seen in patients with a neurological condition or advanced dementia.

The most frequent cause is due to lack of use, and subsequent shortening/tightening of the muscles and tendons over time.

If you think your resident may have a hand contracture, this is a checklist of things to look out for:

- spending much of the time with a clenched fist
- unable to fully open hand and stretch out fingers, even with help
- fingernails starting to press into palm of the hand
- hand starting to become odorous and difficult to clean
- expressing pain when you try to open out their hand

If you are a care home worker and suspect a patient has a hand contracture, please refer them to the Care Home Support Team (CHST) for an assessment (further details given below). In other situations, please raise the issue with a healthcare professional involved in their care.

The best outcomes can be achieved if the hand contracture is identified early on.

Daily hand care

Whilst awaiting an assessment, these are some things to consider.

- Are they in pain during hand hygiene?
- Do they need pain relief prior to personal care? (If nothing is prescribed, do you need to liaise with the GP about a medication review?)
- Could you use something like a rolled-up flannel between fingers and palm (even a baby flannel if the gap is small) to stop the fingers digging into the palm?

It is vital to adequately manage this condition to prevent pressure sores and skin breakdown to the palm and fingers. It is also important to stretch and move the hand as much as tolerated to prevent further deterioration and pain from stiff joints and tight tendons.

Please also refer to '**Resource 2 – Hand hygiene principles**', for further advice on keeping hands clean.



Interventions

Ask a healthcare professional for further advice regarding a trial if you feel any of these options may be suitable.

Palm protectors

These may be used to prevent hand contractures from worsening, or to prevent deterioration of the skin in their hand and fingers in mild to moderate contractures.



MEDORIS Hand Grip
Palm Protector

Image credit: medoriscare.com



Pressure Care Management
Microbead Palm Protector

Image credit: pressurecaremanagement.co.uk

Dermisplus Prevent

'Gel' strips/pads may be trialled for protection in circumstances when fingers are digging into palms, and it is no longer possible to get any kind of splint in place.

The CHST can advise on this, and, if appropriate, long-term prescription may be available through the GP.



Dermisplus Prevent Pads

Image credit: frontier-group.co.uk

Sensi-Care Wand

Wiping over the palm of the hand with a Sensi-Care Wand may prevent the palm becoming moist when contracted.



It is the responsibility of carers/care home staff to monitor the hand condition and ensure all care needs are met.



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