“Over 70,000 people are living with stroke and its consequences, and each year there will be approximately 15,000 new diagnoses of stroke.” NHSQIS (2004)

After discharge- What can happen:

A few months after a stroke the tone in the muscles of the hand can increase.

If the muscles are not maintained in their lengthened position then they will shorten giving flexion contractures.

Problems associated with a contracted hand:

- Pain
- Hygiene: it is difficult to open the hand to wash the palm and cut the finger nails
- Dressing: if the wrist is contracted it can be difficult to put the hand through a shirt sleeve

Treating contractures:

Contractures are very difficult to treat and when progress is made it is often very slow with an uncertain outcome. It is better to prevent contractures in the wrist and hand than to have to treat them once they occur. “The application of an orthosis is better than nothing or low intensive therapy and a resting hand orthosis applied to a flaccid hand does not cause contracture and may prevent oedema” Bowen (1988)

Custom made orthoses:

If the fingers or wrist are difficult to move out of a flexed position, then a referral to an appropriately trained Allied Health Professional should be made for assessment and possible supply of a custom made orthoses.

References:


Lannin NA. Is hand splinting effective for adults following stroke? A systematic review and methodological critique of published research. School of Exercise and Health Sciences, University of Western Sydney and RD Herbert School of Physiotherapy, University of Sydney, Australia. NHS QIS Stroke Services, Care of the Patient in the Acute Setting 2004