

## INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

# Desensitisation

### **Hypersensitivity**

Hypersensitivity can occur when small nerves in your skin start to recover following surgery or after an accident.

Symptoms can include extreme discomfort and irritation, usually happening in or around a scar.

Hypersensitivity can make it difficult to use the area that has been affected, resulting in stiffness, weakness and a longer recovery.

Desensitisation techniques are used to reduce the symptoms of hypersensitivity and to increase your tolerance to touch of the affected area.

### **Desensitisation techniques**

#### **Massage**

Using a vitamin E based moisturiser, massage around the sensitive area and directly over the scar if you are able to tolerate this. Do this for 10-15 minutes at least three times a day.

Once this starts to feel comfortable you can progress to gently tapping the affected area.

#### **Texture massage**

Applying different textures to the area that is hypersensitive can help to improve your symptoms.

Your therapist will provide you with a pack of different textures ranging from soft to coarse, for example:

- Lycra
- Cotton wool
- Felt
- Velcro.

Identify which texture is the least irritating and use it to stroke the hypersensitive area. Do this for 5-10 minutes, five times a day.

Over time you will be able to do this with more pressure and progress through to the more irritating textures. The less irritating texture should feel comfortable before moving on to the next item.

#### **Immersion**

Use objects such as:

- Polystyrene balls
- Sand
- Small pebbles
- Round beads
- Dried rice/pasta.

Progress through from rubbing the affected area with the items to submersing the affected area completely. Do this for 5-10 minutes, five times a day.

#### **Vibration**

Suggestions:

- Electric toothbrush handle
- Electric shaver handle.

Start by applying vibration around the outside of the affected area, then gradually move inwards as you are able to tolerate.

Depending on the level of sensitivity, your therapist may provide you with a dressing to reduce the pain in the affected area whilst conducting massage.

**If you have any questions or concerns about your exercises or your condition please contact your therapist:**

On:

- (01623) 622515, extension 4271 for **King's Mill Hospital**.
- (01623) 622515, extension 5885 for **Newark Hospital**.

**For appointment queries please contact Therapy Services reception on (01623) 622515, extension 3221.**

**You should not miss your appointment with the hand specialist or hand therapist if one has been requested.**

#### **Further sources of information**

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)

Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

#### **Patient Experience Team (PET)**

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet (if relevant) please email [sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net) or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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