

Patient information

Relaxation

Occupational Therapy - Therapies Department

When living with a long-term health condition it can be helpful to learn positive strategies to support you in managing your condition effectively.

Looking after your body and mind is important to enable you to fulfil your daily tasks and maintain a positive outlook in the management of your condition.

When you experience pain, it can be difficult to focus on your daily tasks, which may cause you to feel anxious and affect your overall wellbeing.

There are simple techniques you can introduce to your daily routine that can be learnt to help you manage your feelings of anxiety.

What is tension and anxiety?

Tension is defined as mental or emotional strain that is placed upon us.

Anxiety is described as a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome.

What is relaxation?

Relaxation is an important part of life. It can help us reduce stress and tension held in our body and mind and can help us to feel less anxious and tense.

Benefits of relaxation

- Relaxation can assist with relieving muscle tension.
- Reduce anxiety.
- Improve overall wellbeing.
- Positive effects on your body restoring normal breathing.
- Reduce heart rate/ blood pressure.

There are various ways to relax which will be different for everyone. You may enjoy listening to music, taking a warm bath, watching a film, or reading a book. However, there are recommended relaxation techniques that can be learnt to improve the management of your anxiety.

Different relaxation techniques

Deep breathing

Paying attention to your breathing is one of the most important ways to relieve anxiety and tension.

The best way to slow down your breathing is to do the following:

- Breathe in through your nose slowly, try to take at least four to five seconds.
- Hold for two to three seconds.
- Breathe out slowly through your lips like you are whistling.

Guided imagery

This is a method of relaxation and mental visualisation that concentrates the mind on positive thoughts in attempt to reduce pain and stress. An example of this may be to listen to a CD/ smart app to a story that takes you on a walk through a garden or walking along the beach experiencing all the senses around you.

Autogenic

This is a technique that teaches your body to respond to verbal instructions that encourage your body to relax. For example, you may be asked to imagine your limbs feel warm and heavy, that your breathing is slow and regular, that your mind is calm, and your body is relaxed.

Mindful meditation

This is method of relaxation you can use to achieve a calm, focused, harmonious mind and state of being, which can help reduce pain and discomfort.

There are various audio recordings that you can be used to learn and practise these techniques, for example Calm and Headspace apps.

Introducing relaxation techniques to your routine can be helped by considering the following factors:

- **Environment**
Eliminate distractions, noise, smell and light and ensure correct temperature.
- **Attitude**
It is helpful to adopt a positive approach and try to clear your mind of any thoughts and distractions.
- **Positioning**
Try to get yourself into a comfortable position, either in a comfortable chair or lying down. It is important you are not using your muscles to keep you in a position as this may increase tension and work against the relaxation process.

- **Clothing**

You should be wearing comfortable clothing.

- **Practice**

Try to introduce just ten minutes a day to start with, make it part of your routine, you can increase the time spent practising to suit you.

You may have to try different types of relaxation before you find the right technique for you. If you find using a relaxation technique helps, then you may start to notice a positive change in your overall wellbeing.

Ask your therapist if you are interested in any of the relaxation techniques mentioned above.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

Occupational Therapy Service

Royal and Broadgreen Hospitals

Tel: 0151 706 2760

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2760

Aintree Hospital

Tel: 0151 529 8047

Text phone number: 18001 0151 529 8047

Versus Arthritis

Helpline Tel number: 08005200520

www.versusarthritis.org

National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS)

Freephone number: 0800 298 7650

www.nras.org.uk

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Review date: April 2027

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