

Patient information

Hypersensitivity

Therapies Department

The body's response to injury or surgery can vary between different people and sometimes an area of hypersensitivity can develop.

This is more common in injuries involving nerves, but can occur over and around any scar. In nerve injuries the area of hypersensitivity may be away from the scar; in the area of skin supplied by that nerve.

The effect may be that even light touch or pressure over the area can cause extreme discomfort.

What can be done?

In the majority of cases the problem will gradually settle down, helped by the use of desensitisation techniques.

What must you do?

It is important to know what aggravates the problem and what eases it e.g. is pressure worse than light touch? Does warmth ease it? Or does cold make it worse?

Make yourself touch the area to find out these things and discuss with your therapist.

Desensitisation

This involves gradually increasing tolerance to touch or pressure through progressive stimulation of the area until it no longer causes you discomfort i.e. doing what you have probably been trying to avoid.

How to do it

No-one likes doing something that they know is going to cause them discomfort. It will ease the process if you do so when you are comfortable and relaxed. You may find it helpful to warm your hand first e.g. by soaking it in warm water:

Start by gently stroking the area with the material suggested by your therapist.

- Do this for as long as you can tolerate, this may initially only be a couple of minutes. Repeat at least five times each day.
- Gradually build up the time you can tolerate this until it no longer causes irritation.
- Progress onto the next texture advised by your therapist. Also tap along the sensitive area using a finger for as **long as** you can put up with. Gradually build up the length of time.
- Try to use your hand as normally as possible (not using it will make symptoms worse).
- Massage may also help (see separate sheet).

This procedure takes time and patience but with persistence, improvements can be made.

It must be done often, once a day is not enough and once a week is of no benefit at all, which is why it is important that you do this yourself between therapy sessions in hospital.

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

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