

## Patient information

# What Is Spasticity And How Do We Manage It?

Therapies Department

### What is Spasticity?

Spasticity can be described as over excited muscle activity, resulting in tightness and or spasms in the affected muscles.

Spasticity tends to affect a group of muscles rather than just one, with the most common groups being in an arm or leg.

Spasticity occurs when messages from the brain or spinal cord have difficulty or cannot reach the muscles affected. This breakdown in communication can mean that our muscles don't know when to switch off.

### Common conditions causing spasticity

**Some of the most common conditions that are known to cause spasticity include:**

- Stoke.
- Brain injury.
- Spinal injury.
- Multiple Sclerosis.
- Cerebral Palsy.

**Some known symptoms of spasticity can include:**

- Muscle tightness.
- Joint stiffness.
- Muscle spasms.
- Increased reflexes.
- Difficulty co-ordinating movements.
- Pain.

## **Side effects that can occur as result of long term spasticity include:**

- Loss of movement at a joint.
- Difficulty performing daily activities.
- Difficulty performing aspects of your personal care.
- It can impact on your ability to transfer or walk.
- Pain.
- Pressure sores.

## **How can you help your symptoms?**

When your body is put under stress or discomfort, this can have an impact on your symptoms. Sometimes this is out of our control but there are some things you can look out for:

- Pain.
- Infection – such as viruses or bugs.
- In-growing toenail.
- Sores to skin.
- Feeling tired.
- Feeling stressed.
- Upset bowels.
- Tight clothing.
- Poor fitting seating.
- Poor positioning of your body.

Understanding and managing your spasticity is an important part of your treatment plan as it can have an impact on everyday things that we do.

Developing a treatment plan to help manage your symptoms will help you achieve your rehab goals and help maintain the improvements you make. Maintaining your management programme will help manage some of your symptoms and also reduce the risk of developing some of the side effects of spasticity.

## **Management of Spasticity**

Every person is different and so is their spasticity. As well as this everyone's goals are individual and personal to them.

For this reason everyone's treatment is different.

Current research recommends that a patient's treatment plan is tailored to their individual needs by a multidisciplinary team.

## **The Multidisciplinary Team**

The professionals involved in your management plan will depend on your individual needs and goals.

### **Some of the professions that may be directly involved can include:**

- Specialist Rehabilitation Consultant.
- Specialist Rehabilitation Doctor(s).
- Specialist Nurse(s).
- Occupational Therapist.
- Physiotherapist

## **Medical management**

Your spasticity may be managed by a therapeutic treatment plan and there may be no need for any medical intervention. However, sometimes there may be a need for both a medical and therapeutic treatment plan. Both forms of treatment will complement each other.

### **Medical management may include:**

- Medication.
- Muscle injection (commonly known as 'Botulinum toxin ').
- Surgical intervention (in rare cases).

## **Therapeutic Management**

Your therapist(s) will tailor your management programme to your needs and goals. This can therefore change and develop as you progress along your rehab journey.

There are many different interventions that may be utilised by each profession as appropriate for each patient. For any queries about your therapeutic management of spasticity, please discuss this with your therapists.

## **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**

**BGH Ward 5**

**The Phoenix Rehabilitation Unit**

**Tel: 0151 282 6766**

**Text phone number: 18001 0151 282 6766**

## **Useful Telephone Numbers**

**MS Trust:**

**Tel: 01462 476 700**

**Stroke Association Helpline**

**Tel: 0303 303 3100**

**SCOPE (Cerebral Palsy) Helpline**

**Tel: 0808 800 3333**

**British Brain and Spine Foundation Helpline**

**Tel: 0800 808 1000**

**The Bladder and Bowel Foundation Helpline**

**Tel: 0845 345 0165**

## **Useful Websites:**

- <https://strokefoundation.org.au/About-Stroke/Help-after-stroke/Stroke-resources-and-factsheets>
- <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/All-Disorders/Spasticity-Information-Page>
- <https://support.mstrust.org.uk/file/spasticity-care-pathway.pdf>

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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