

Scar Desensitisation Programme

This leaflet explains more about the scar desensitisation programme and what you can do to help decrease hypersensitivity. If you have any further questions, please speak to your therapist.

Why do I need scar desensitisation?

Following surgery or injury, scars can become oversensitive, tender and/or painful to touch. This is known as hypersensitivity and unfortunately doesn't always go away by itself.

The nerves in the hand are more sensitive than other parts of the body. After any injury, the skin of the hand must get used to being touched again for hypersensitivity to improve. If you avoid touching sensitive areas of your hand, they may remain hypersensitive.

The desensitisation activities below may help speed up recovery from hypersensitivity in your hands and fingers.

Not all activities may be useful now, so your therapist may only ask you to complete some of them. Please only complete ones that are ticked.

What activities should I do?

If the exercises are too painful, try using less pressure or take a break and try again later. If it is too painful to complete the programme, speak with your pharmacist or doctor who may recommend pain killers.

For the best results carry out the activities three or four times a day, for up to 10 minutes

Texture massage

Experiment with using different textures to try to build up your tolerance of them. Your therapist can give ideas of what you can use.

1. Rub the sensitive area using the softest texture for up to two minutes.
2. Move onto a slightly rougher texture and continue to rub for another two minutes.
3. Slowly work through the textures up to the texture that you do not tolerate (i.e., stop before the texture you cannot tolerate).
4. Try to finish on a comfortable sensation, continuing to progress as your skin is able to tolerate different/more textures.
5. Take a break, then start again after a few minutes.

Percussion or tapping

This technique will help dull the area of sensitivity in your hand by touching it repeatedly.

1. Using your other hand or a light object such as a pencil, lightly tap the area of your hand which is hypersensitive.
2. Find the spot which is most hypersensitive.
3. Begin to tap this spot lightly and rapidly, two or three times per second.
4. Keep tapping continuously for two minutes or until you notice feeling in the area changing or it is starting to feel numb.
5. Take a break, then start again after a few minutes.

Friction massage

This will help move the scar tissue under the skin, reducing hypersensitivity and helping the appearance of the scar.

1. With the tip of a finger of your opposite hand, press firmly against the scar and without sliding across the skin, push gently from side to side. Hold each end position for five seconds.
2. Repeat in the other direction.
3. If your scar is wider than your fingertip, repeat this action along every section of the scar.
4. Continue for ____minutes.

Immersion activities

Hypersensitivity may be reduced by immersing your hand into different textures.

1. Get three or four medium sized bowls and fill each one with different textured material such as cotton wool, dried pasta, rice, dried beans or lentils.
2. Starting with the softest texture, move your hand through it slowly for up to two minutes.
3. If you can tolerate this texture for two minutes then move on to the next roughest texture.
4. Again, move your hand through for up to two minutes.
5. Continue through the textures in the same way.

Desensitisation in everyday activities

Try to use your hand normally to help reduce hypersensitivity. For example:

1. Use a flannel or towel to rub the sensitive area while having a bath or shower.
2. When dressing, run your hand over the different textures of your clothes.
3. Wash up by hand using your affected finger or hand.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about scar desensitisation, please discuss them with your therapist at your next appointment.

For more urgent queries please contact treatment enquiries on 020 8725 1038 (answer phone only, please leave a message and someone will get back to you as soon as possible). For appointment enquiries, please contact 020 8725 0007.

Your therapist's name is: _____

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk



Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

