

Normalising Sensation

This leaflet explains the different treatment options available to help re-establish normal sensation and what you can do to improve the sensitivity in your hand and / or arm. If you have any further questions, please speak to your therapist.

Why do I need to do a sensitisation programme?

After an injury or surgery, nerves within the skin can become either:

- 1) Overly sensitive and the sensation of touch and pressure can feel painful. This is known as hypersensitivity and unfortunately this does not always settle by itself.
- 2) Numb or have significantly reduced sensation.

After any injury or surgery, the skin of the hand and / or arm must get used to being touched again for the sensation to recover. If you avoid touching the numb or sensitive areas of your hand and / or arm they may not improve.

The following programme activities below may help speed up recovery.

What activities should I do?

Your therapist will recommend the activities you need to do. Please only complete the ones that are ticked. For the best results **carry out the activities three or four times a day, up to 10 minutes each time.**

- 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, please discuss this with your therapist.

Texture massage

Experiment with using different textures to try to build up your tolerance of them. You can use a range of textures from around your home or workplace (e.g., cotton wool, silk scarf, denim, fleeces, scourers, newspaper, metal cutlery). If you are unable to do this, your therapist can provide you with some different textures to use. Rank the textures in order of discomfort and then:

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 until you are unable to tolerate it anymore.
4. Move back to the softest texture for 30-60 seconds.
5. Take a break, and then start again after a few minutes. Repeat times.

Percussion or tapping

This technique will help to dull the area of sensitivity by touching it repeatedly.

1. Using your other hand or a light object such as a pencil, lightly tap the area which is hypersensitive; find the spot which is most hypersensitive.
2. Begin to tap this spot lightly and rapidly, 2-3 times per second.

3. Keep tapping continuously for two minutes or until you notice feeling in the area changing or it is starting to feel numb.
4. Take a break, then start again after a few minutes.

Immersion activities

Increased or decreased sensitivity may be normalised by immersing your hand / arm into different textures.

1. Get three or four medium sized bowls and fill each one with a different textured material such as warm / cool water, cotton wool, dried pasta, rice, dried beans, or lentils.
2. Starting with the softest texture, initially submerge your hand and, if you can, 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.

Light touch / massage

Using your unaffected hand, gently massage a non-perfumed moisturiser cream around the affected area. Start on the outside of the sensitive area and gradually work your way inwards. Do this continuously for up to five minutes.

Take a break, and then start again for a further five minutes.

Everyday activities

Try to use your hand normally to help reduce hypersensitivity. Examples include:

1. Use a flannel or towel to rub the sensitive area while having a bath or shower.
2. When drying your hand / arm, rub the sensitive area with a towel.
3. When dressing, run your hand over the different textures of your clothes.
4. When brushing your hair, try to run your hand through your hair.
5. Wash up by hand using your affected finger or hand.
6. Try to involve your affected / sensitive hand equally in activities as much as possible.

Contact us

If you have any questions regarding the information provided in this leaflet, please feel free to discuss them with your therapist at your next appointment. For more urgent queries the team can be contacted on the **treatment enquiries** phone number listed below.

Your therapist's name is _____

Treatment enquiries: 020 8725 1038 (answer phone only)

Appointments: 020 8725 0007

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 advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

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.

