

Mirror Therapy

This leaflet explains mirror therapy, including how you can use it as a treatment technique and what you can expect when you use it as part of your hand therapy treatment programme.

If you have any further questions, please speak to your hand therapist.

What is mirror therapy?

Research has shown that sometimes there is a mismatch between the instructions from your brain to move your joints and the feelings and feedback that you would expect to get when doing so (we call this sensory feedback). These feelings can sometimes cause pain and abnormal sensations in the hand and wrist.

Mirror therapy is a treatment technique which is thought to 'trick' the brain into thinking that the painful and stiff limb is moving normally. With repetitive daily practice, it is possible to reduce the experience of pain.

What will I need for mirror therapy?

You need either a mirror box or a medium or large free standing mirror that can be placed next to a chair. The mirror must be large enough for you to see the reflection from your forearm to your hand.

Find a quiet room where you will not be distracted. Keep a daily diary of each session, to record:

1. The number of sessions completed
2. The length of each session
3. Any effects, such as an increase or decrease in pain or changes in sensation.

What should I do?

- Remove any jewelry or watches.
- Sit or stand with your unaffected arm and hand reflected in the mirror and your painful arm and hand behind the mirror, out of sight.
- To start, look at the reflection without moving. Concentrate on the reflection for a couple of minutes.
- Once you are comfortable with this, start to slowly move **both** limbs in the same way. Use slow, smooth and controlled movements.
- If at first your affected hand or wrist is too painful to move, keep your unaffected arm moving. While doing this, try to imagine that you are moving your affected hand the same as your unaffected hand.

- If pain or stiffness becomes a problem while you are exercising, **STOP** and go back to looking at the mirror image while both limbs are resting.
- As you start to improve, your therapist may give you extra exercises to try using the mirror.

How often should I do mirror therapy?

- Aim to complete four to five sessions a day
- For five to ten minutes at a time.
- Try to do your mirror therapy programme 'little and often' throughout the day.

Will I have any pain, sensations or side effects?

Some people may experience unusual sensations in the arm and hand when it is behind the mirror, such as heaviness, lightness, floating or feeling a change in temperature.

If you have an uncomfortable sensation, stop the exercise and look at both limbs without the mirror. The sensation should quickly pass.

Further hints and tips

- Aim to move your affected and unaffected hand and arm in the same way.
- It doesn't matter if the hand behind the mirror does smaller movements than the one in front of the mirror, if the movements are done together.
- Throughout your mirror therapy session, seek to remain relaxed and calm through taking slow, deep breaths.
- Remember not to use the mirror levels for long periods as your concentration levels will drop and this may increase your pain.

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 is: _____

Treatment enquiries: 020 8725 1038

Appointments: 020 8725 0007

Email: handtherapy@stgeorges.nhs.uk

Or scan
here



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.

