

Desensitisation

Pain Management Service

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

What is desensitisation?

Some people who experience persistent pain will have increased sensitivity to things like touch, pressure or temperature in the skin of the affected area. This is called hypersensitivity. Desensitisation is an effective way to treat this increased sensitivity especially when used in combination with other medical or therapeutic interventions.

Desensitisation techniques are used to gradually improve tolerance to touch the sensitive area of skin. The aim of these techniques is to make sensations in the skin of the affected area feel more normal again, by re-educating the nervous system. Desensitisation can be an effective way to treat hypersensitivity.

Why does touch become hypersensitive?

The nervous system needs to be sensitive enough to detect a potentially dangerous stimulus and let us know about it (by giving us pain). Think of when you touch a hot surface, your hand moves away quickly to protect you and prevent burning the skin. Sometimes, however, after an injury or in an area of pain, that area becomes more sensitive to touch, pressure or temperature as the nervous system overprotects that area.

How do I start?

Find a quiet place where you can feel relaxed.

Where possible, feel the sensation on a part of your body unaffected by your injury or hypersensitivity first. Notice how this normal sensation feels when you touch the non affected area.

Do this for one minute and move to the affected side.

Remember how that 'normal' sensation felt and start by gently massaging and touching the affected area. Start at the edge of the sensitive area and gradually work into the more sensitive area. Firm pressure is easier to tolerate than light touch and tickling.

You need to look at the place you are desensitising, whilst staying as relaxed as possible and aim to do this for a short period of time (even 1 to 2 minutes) as many times as possible throughout the day is best.

When you can tolerate this for a longer period progress by using different textured materials. Many materials used for desensitisation can easily be found around the house and used to make your own portable texture kit. Here are a few examples of some of the materials you might want to include in your kit.

- Fabrics progress from softer materials, for example, silk, cotton, and denim to rougher materials like felt and wool to a textured fabric like Velcro
- Makeup / toothbrush with soft bristles, progressing to one with harder bristles
- Warm water and soapy water
- Bowls of pasta, rice, sand and any grains which can be used to immerse your affected body part.

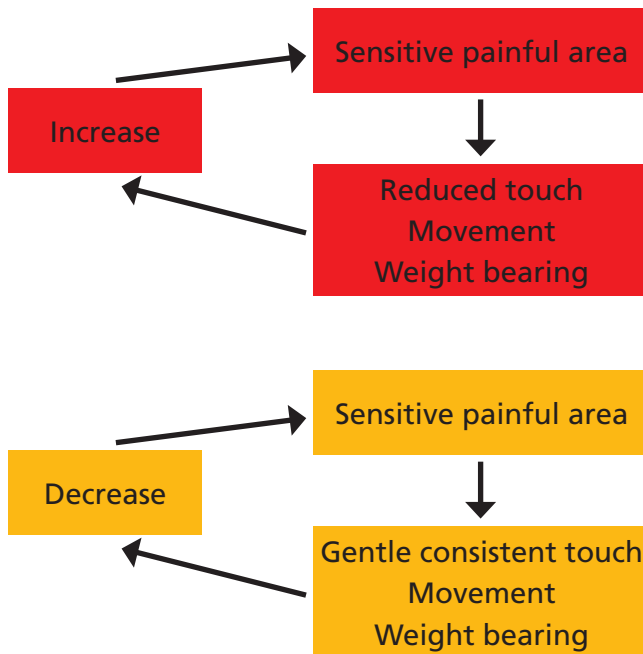
This course of progression may take several days to several weeks or months, depending on the level of hypersensitivity.

This graded approach can be helpful with moving a joint that has become hypersensitive. As before feeling the sensation on a part of your body unaffected by your injury or hypersensitivity first.

Next, try and remember how that 'normal' sensation felt when moving to the affected area.

You need to look at the joints that you are moving and concentrate on how the sensation felt on the unaffected area, whilst staying as relaxed as possible.

It is usual for these techniques to be uncomfortable and, to some extent, painful whilst doing them and shortly afterwards, but you are not causing any damage.



Are there any side effects?

No specific side effects have been reported from using this technique, however, you might initially experience a flare-up of your symptoms. To minimise this, you can:

- Swap frequently between the affected and non-affected side, but with practice, the process will become easier
- Reduce the time and gradually increase the time as it becomes easier
- Find a quiet place where you can feel relaxed.

Additional information

If you require more information or have any questions, please contact the Pain Team on 01902 695122.

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。