

After trauma or surgery, nerves can be injured, irritated or compressed causing normal stimulation (such as vibration, touch, pressure, temperature changes or various textures) to cause hypersensitivity or altered sensation.

The aim of sensory re-training is to overload the affected area by bombarding the sensitive nerve endings with sensory stimuli. This should result in reducing the nerve endings sensitivity.

There are different sensory re-training techniques:

- Massage
- Texture
- Sensory Containers

Massage

An initial means of sensory re-training is massage. Using a perfume free moisturising cream or lotion, use the unaffected thumb or fingers to make circular movements (see diagram A) and Criss-Cross movements (see Diagram B) over and around the affected area. Continue for 5 minutes, 5 times a day.

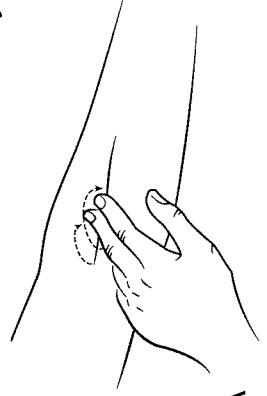


Diagram A



Diagram B

Massage can also help to soften and flatten the scar as well as allowing you to apply pressure to the area. (Your Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist can give you further advice about scar management).

Texture

Lightly rub the affected area with different textures, gradually increasing roughness and pressure (as much as you can cope with) over the coming next few days and weeks.

Start with soft textures such as cotton wool, velvet or silk. Continue for 2-3 minutes and then vary textures to include slightly rougher materials (e.g. denim, sofa fabric, wool) as and when you can cope with them. Eventually you should be able to manage rough materials such as dry loofah, Velcro loop, emery board, gently touching the scar.

Sensory Containers

Fill a number of containers with different particles to give stimulation of varying strengths e.g. cotton wool, red lentils, dried peas, rice.

Place the hypersensitive area in the container of the least irritating items (e.g. cotton wool) and make small stirring movements, continually changing direction. Continue for 2-3 minutes, and then place your hand or limb in a container of items which are just tolerable and repeat, as above, for 2 minutes.

You should do this 4-5 times every day – make sure you have a period of rest after each session.

You should begin to notice a change in your overall sensitivity within the first 4 weeks.

You should continually change to more difficult techniques as your tolerance allows, to achieve the best results.

It is important to be aware that during and just after a session of treatment, the unpleasant sensations may increase for a short period of time. This is normal as you have essentially irritated the hypersensitive area, but this period of increased sensation will reduce.

Another important thing to remember is to use your hand as normally as possible for everyday activities at home and at work. This will also help to further decrease hypersensitivity and increase your tolerance.

If you have any queries regarding your sensory re-training programme please contact your Occupational Therapist/ Physiotherapist

Occupational Therapist:

: _____

Physiotherapist:

: _____

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Information for patients about Sensory Re-training Programme Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy

Name: _____

Date: _____

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