

Desensitisation

Hand Therapy Patient Information

Hand injuries are often very tender and hypersensitivity can occur. This is an exaggerated, painful response to a stimulus that is not normally painful. Unfortunately, this does not always go away by itself.

You may have a natural tendency to protect the sensitive area. But avoiding contact/stimulation reinforces the sensitivity. Therefore, it is important to touch the area to help it feel more 'normal'.

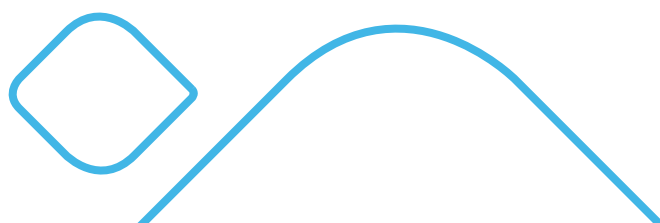
Below are some techniques that can help. These can be uncomfortable. If they are too painful, try using less pressure or focusing on surrounding areas, which may be more tolerable. If that does not work, take a break before trying again.

Massage

- Using a moisturising cream, gently massage the sensitive area. You may want to begin away from the sensitive area and gradually move towards it.
- Massage in circular motions keeping a constant pressure and contact with the skin. You may roll your thumb or tap gently over the area.
- As the area becomes less sensitive, gradually increase the pressure you apply.
- Vibration is effective in treating hypersensitivity. You can use the base of an electric toothbrush / shaver, moving in circular motions, as above.
- Massage the area for between 5-10 minutes until the area feels more comfortable.

Texture Massage

- Use a variety of textures, e.g. cotton, wool, flannel, denim, sponge, metal.
- Begin with textures that you find most comfortable.
- Gently rub the material around the area, gradually moving towards the sensitive area for 2-3 minutes. Ensure that the texture is in constant contact with the skin and the pressure is constant throughout.
- You should aim to use 10 different textures per day.
- Continue to use the same textures until they no longer cause abnormal feelings. Then repeat with textures that cause slightly more discomfort.
- It may take a few sessions before you feel able to move on to the next texture.



Immersion Massage

- Fill a number of bowls with different particles of varying textures (smooth to rough) e.g. lentils, rice, pasta, sand.
- Establish an order as before – most to least comfortable. Place your hand into the bowl and move the hand around in stirring motions, as well as gripping and spanning your fingers, varying the speed and direction.
- Once the particles become tolerable it is time to progress on to the next bowl.
- You can also put small objects such as buttons/keys etc. into the bowl to pick out when able.
- You can also bounce your hand gently up and down in the particles.
- All of this can be done with your eyes open or closed.

Function

It is important to use your hand in normal functional tasks and daily activities as soon as you are able. Following the above desensitisation programme, carry out an activity such as washing the dishes, playing cards, writing or work related tasks. Ensure you know that the task you are about to do is **achievable**. This will reinforce normal functional use of the injured area.

Remember

- Try to carry out this treatment 5 – 6 times daily.
- It may take several sessions until you notice an improvement.
- It is important to be consistent with this treatment. The more consistent you are the faster your symptoms will be relieved.

If you have any problems, please contact your therapist. Contact details are below.

Hand Therapy

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital.

Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.