

## Scar Hypersensitivity

Advice and Treatment Leaflet

After an injury or operation, nerves within the skin sometimes become over (hyper) sensitive. Scar hypersensitivity is a common symptom of nerve re-growth. It is due to the increased sensitivity of immature nerve endings to stimulation. The tendency is therefore to avoid using the hypersensitive area because the stimulation is uncomfortable and painful. Desensitization is a treatment programme aimed at making an overly sensitive scar or area feel normal again.

Hypersensitivity can be overcome by repeated stimulation of the sensitive nerve endings with different stimuli. Repeated stimulation is used to overcome the problem. Treatment sessions should be short and often, and the stimulation should be slightly irritating but tolerable.

### Treatment Programme

#### 1. Massage

Using E45 or a perfume free moisturiser, massage in a circular motion over the sensitive area. If there is swelling, elevate the hand and massage towards the shoulder. Concentrate in the area of sensitivity.

Repeat 5 times daily for 3-5 minutes

#### 2. Textures

Gradually stimulate the sensitive area with soft non-irritating textures, (i.e. cotton wool) and increase to more irritating textures, (coarse linen, denim). Select the items you find irritating at home, i.e. bed sheets, shirt sleeves.

Repeat 5 times daily for 3-5 minutes

#### 3. Percussion

Use a repetitive activity, such as tapping to cause vibration and percussion to nerve endings. Also, tapping over the sensitive area with fingertip or increasing stimulus with a pen. Increase to heavier tapping.

Repeat 5 times daily for 3-5 minutes

#### 4. Rice/Sand/Barley

Fill a basin/bowl with rice or beans so that it is bearable to touch. Work your hand through the material. Change and progress the texture to rougher textures of barley, sand or shells.

Repeat 5 times daily for 3-5 minutes

## **5. Hot and Cold Water**

Take a basin of cold water, with ice-cubes in it and a basin of warm water. Place hand into warm water and make ten fists, place into cold water and make ten fists.

Repeat 5 times daily for 3-5 minutes

## **Further Information**

We hope this leaflet will help you understand how to care for your scar. If you feel you need any more information or have any concerns please contact the Physiotherapy Department on (021) 4922400.