

## Further information

Below are the telephone numbers for the Community Outpatient Physiotherapy departments. Please call your local department for any further information/guidance;

Chippenham - 01249 456451

Devizes - 01380 732520

Malmesbury - 01666 827583

Melksham - 01225 701027

Salisbury - 01722 336262 Ext 4425/4413

Savernake - 01672 517310

Trowbridge – 01225 711341

Warminster – 01985 224716

# Patient Information



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## Desensitisation Programme

**If you would like this information in another format, i.e. large print or another language, please contact the Customer Service Department on 01793 604031.**

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## What is Increased Sensitivity? (Hypersensitivity)

Often after an injury, our nerves can become very sensitive as a protective response. Sometimes, even after the injury fully heals, these nerves can remain highly sensitive.

Symptoms you may experience are:

**Hypersensitivity to light touch:** This includes sharp, stabbing or tingling sensations and can occur with clothes or bedding touching your skin, hot or cold temperatures or certain materials such as metal surfaces.

**Pins and Needles:** This can occur with activity or at rest.

**Reduced sensation:** You may be unable to feel the affected area as well as on the opposite side. This may result in reduced grip or a tendency to drop things. Be aware, you may be at risk of injury due to lack of sensation.

**Mottled skin:** The effected area may become discoloured, darker in colour or have a patchy appearance.

**Sweating:** This may be out of context to activity levels i.e. at rest and unusual for you.

**Swelling:** A sensitised tissue may become swollen, even after the initial injury has fully healed.

**Avoidance.** You may not like to look at the area, it might make you feel nauseous or fearful.

It is possible to influence hypersensitivity, as nerve cells are constantly being replaced as we move and function. So if we stimulate them in a normal way, we can encourage them to return back to normal function.

## What can you do to help?

With the symptoms described, you may feel you want to protect the area, but actually we need to expose it to lots of different stimuli to help to normalise nerve function.

The principle of these treatments is to send different messages to the brain e.g. change of pressure, temperature and position etc. This bombards the brain with more normal messages so that the hypersensitive/painful messages do not get a chance to be registered by the brain.

You could try:

**Textures:** Pick three types ranging from soft to rough as agreed with your therapist. Stroke the texture with full skin contact up and down the area ten times, four times a day.

**Massage:** Gentle touch to the area with or without an emollient for five to ten minutes, four times a day.

**Texture emersion:** Fill a container with dry rice, lentils, salt or sand. Immerse the area and swirl for three minutes, four times a day

**Mirrors:** With the hand or foot either side of a mirror, look into the mirror on the unaffected side. As you move through different motion that your therapist will prescribe, watch the mirror image of your affected side. Spend five to ten minutes, four times a day doing this activity .