

Sensory loss in neurological conditions

Physiotherapy Department



Patient information leaflet

You have received this leaflet because your family member has symptoms of sensation loss due to a neurological condition. Families and carers have an important role in the treatment of sensation loss. This leaflet will tell you about some of the simple treatment techniques you can practice with your friend or relative.

What is sensation loss?

Disturbances of sensation are common. This means that there is a complete or partial loss of feeling on the side of the body that has been affected by the condition. This can affect the arm, hand, leg and foot.

Sensory problems can have different effects on different people depending on the area of damage. Some of the effects include:

- Unable to feel touch or pressure.
- Unable to feel exactly where they are being touched.
- Unable to feel where their arm or leg is.
- Unable to feel the difference between hot and cold.

What can I do to help?

Massage

Massage provides the patient with stimulation of the arm or leg to enable them to become more aware of the limbs.

This can be done by family and carers when they visit throughout the day. Some simple guidelines will help the patient get the most out of the treatment and ensure no damage is caused:

- Massage should be done for around 15 minutes at a time and can be repeated several times a day.
- The part of the body being massaged should be rested on pillows in a comfortable position, and raised slightly if there is any swelling.

- Make sure you are in a comfortable position by adjusting the bed or your chair and avoid bending over.
- When massaging the hand, care should be taken to massage each finger individually.
- Massage should start at the hand/foot and move up the arm/leg towards the body.
- You can use creams or oils to assist the massage.
- Use a rough towel or face cloth to provide different textures to the skin – the physiotherapist or occupational therapist will advise you on what is best for your relative/friend.
- You can trace around the hand and fingers with your finger to help your friend/relative feel the shape of the hand.
- You can also help maintain movement in the hand by touching the patients thumb to each finger.
- Encourage your family member to look at their limb being massaged and to participate if possible.

Are there any risks or side effects?

It is important to look for any signs of redness/dry skin or pain.

If these are noted then stop and discuss with a physiotherapist, occupational therapist or nurse.

Are there any alternatives to this treatment?

This treatment is part of a range of treatments that will be carried out by the therapists. The information in this leaflet provides the best way for you to get involved with treating sensation loss outside of physiotherapy sessions.

The physiotherapist or occupational therapist will show you how to safely carry out these activities yourself, and if you have any questions about this or any other treatments they will be happy to answer them.

Reference source

- RCP National Clinical Guidelines for Stroke. Forth Edition. Sept 2012

Further information

- The stroke association – www.stroke.org.uk
- Stroke for carers – www.stroke4carers.org

Contact details

If you have any further questions regarding this information please do not hesitate to call us.

Physiotherapy Department

Royal Surrey County Hospital
Guildford

Telephone: 01483 464153

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

Past review date: July 2018

Future review date: July 2021

Author: Elizabeth Gilligan

PIN180724–1567

