

## Burns and Plastic Surgery Occupational Therapy

### **Hypersensitivity & Desensitisation**

Hypersensitivity can occur following an injury and is an exaggerated, painful response to a normally non-painful stimulus.

The aim of desensitisation is to reduce the symptoms of hypersensitivity and increase tolerance to stimulation of the skin with various textures (tactile stimulation).

#### **Desensitisation Treatment**

There may be a natural tendency for you to protect the sensitive area, but avoiding contact with tactile stimulation reinforces the message of sensitivity. It is, therefore, beneficial for you to touch the sensitive area.

There are a number of useful techniques that can help you to overcome the problem: -

#### **1. Massage the hypersensitive area with moisturising cream**

- Start massaging (using small circular motions) at a point where there is normal sensation
- Gradually move up to a point where the discomfort begins and massage that area until the discomfort eases
- Then move up to a point where it again feels sensitive and repeat the process
- Continue until you have reached the most sensitive point
- Carry out 3-4 times a day for approximately 10 minutes

It is important that you do not break contact with the skin during the massage and that you watch the massage being performed, as you will lose the benefits that you gained at the start.

#### **2. Stimulate the area with various textures**

- Graded textures can be used to stroke the hypersensitive area. Start with soft materials and work up to coarser textures e.g. cotton wool, felt, towelling, rough cloth, Velcro loops, Velcro hooks
- If your scar is on your hand or foot, you can immerse your hand or foot in a bowl of particles e.g. cotton wool, kidney beans, lentils, rice, pasta, gravel
- Carry out 3-4 times a day for approximately 10 minutes
- Again, be sure to watch yourself carrying out tactile stimulation

#### **3. Return to normal functional activities**

- It is most important that you continue normal every day activities e.g. washing and dressing, household tasks, writing etc.

**If you require any further guidance or have any questions about the desensitisation programme, please contact your Key Worker.**

**Telephone: (01792) 703980 (Answer Machine available)**

## Desensitisation Record Sheet

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