

Desensitisation

Skin and scars may become very sensitive following an injury. This may occur:

- In a healing wound after an operation or injury
- At an amputation site
- In a skin graft or flap
- Following repair of a nerve
- In the presence of a neuroma (the bulb-like growth of a nerve which has been cut).

This increased sensitivity may not always disappear on its own, which can cause problems with your recovery. The sensitive area needs to become familiar with being touched again for the sensitivity to return to normal.

Desensitisation Techniques

Specific exercises may be performed to help speed up your recovery, and should be done 3 – 4 times a day for 15 minutes or as tolerated.

Massage

- Rub around the sensitive area using a basic, non-fragrant moisturising cream in a circular motion.
- Slowly work towards rubbing over the area of greatest sensitivity.
- Start with light, slow pressure and progress to a firmer, faster pressure with no cream.

Rubbing with textures

- Rub the sensitive area with a variety of different materials.
- Start with the least irritating textures (e.g. cotton wool, silk, wool, velvet). Gradually work up to coarser textures (e.g. Velcro, sandpaper, hessian, towelling).
- Alternatively, rummage through a bag or bucket of small objects. Start with the least irritating objects, and gradually work up to more challenging textures (e.g. cotton wool balls, sand, rice, pebbles, macaroni, beans).

Contrast baths

If the area is sensitive to temperature:

- Set up one bucket of cool water, and one of warm water.
- Immerse the sensitive area in the warm water first for 1-2 mins.
- Swap to the cold for 30 secs – 1 min. Repeat 10 times alternating between the buckets.
- Gradually over time increase the difference in temperature.

Tapping

- Lightly tap the sensitive area rapidly and continuously for several minutes, gradually increasing the force as the area becomes less sensitive.
- Tap with the fingertip of your other hand, then a soft object.

Please contact your therapist if you have any queries or concerns.

Therapist: _____

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