

PATIENT INFORMATION**Relaxation**

What is relaxation?

- Relaxation is an acquired skill which improves every time it is practiced. It is worth noting that relaxation is time given to you to concentrate on your physical and psychological well-being. It is NOT watching television or reading.

Setting up a place to relax in:

- A quiet room with soft lighting
- Warm but not stifling hot or cold
- Uninterrupted and private (turn off phone)
- Comfortable position- chair, bed or the floor
- Aromatherapy scents or candles
- Music or vocal tapes

Relaxation can be carried out on your own or with a partner.

Allow yourself at least 15minutes for a relaxation session and time to reflect after each session.

The role of relaxation:

- Relaxation techniques are a way of releasing unwanted tension by gaining control over the automatic nervous system. By consciously letting go of tension from the muscles and creating an environment which is safe and quiet our body naturally relaxes.
- Similarly, mental relaxation techniques work directly on releasing mental tension and this promotes physical relaxation.

Relaxation has a number of benefits:

- Physically we can become relaxed so that many physical signs of tension will disappear.
- Overall, we will be happier, more fulfilled and able to cope with life with ease, rather than struggling with it.
- Of course we will still face crises and life traumas, but with relaxation our ability to cope with these and move on will be greatly increased.
- A particular feature of relaxation techniques, especially those which concentrate on mental relaxation, is that they include a form of brain wave pattern, known as alpha waves, which are associated with feelings of peace and calm.
- Relaxation techniques are extremely effective, proven over many years. Once learnt it needs to be practised consistently until becomes a way of life.

Deep Breathing

- Most of the time we are unaware of our breathing. It's controlled without us even thinking about it.
- If you run up a steep hill however, you would almost certainly notice breathlessness. When you are tense and anxious your breathing can be affected, it will tend to become more rapid and shallow- using only the top part of your lungs.
- It is important to breathe properly in order to stay healthy in general. If you learn how to take control over your breathing, you may help to decrease your anxiety and tension levels.

Deep breathing exercise:

To check that you are doing this effectively- rest one of your hands on your chest and one on your stomach

1. Breathe in through your nose to the count of three- allow your stomach to swell, feeling your hand rise as your stomach does
2. Hold your breath for three
3. Then slowly and evenly let the breath out through your mouth the count of four
4. Pause then repeat this technique three or four times

IMPORTANT POINTS:

- Do **NOT** continue deep breathing for long periods of time this may cause you to feel dizzy and faint
- You only need to take four deep breaths each time to get the benefit
- To be able to do this effectively when you are anxious, you need to practice regularly at least twice a day. Start off practising somewhere warm and comfortable, lying down. As it becomes easier try practising while sitting or standing in different environments.

Progressive Relaxation

One relaxation method which is commonly used to help decrease physical tension is called progressive muscle (PR) relaxation.

PR involves series of tense/relax exercises focussing on the body's muscle groups. This helps you to learn the difference between tension and relaxation in your body and recognise the state in which you prefer your body to be.

Exercise:

Routine usually starts with your feet and requires you to move through your muscle groups tensing and the relaxation noticing the difference as you go from your feet you move up through your legs, bottom, arm, shoulders, neck, head and face.

If you still feel tense at the end you can repeat the exercises. If only parts of your body feel tense, you can repeat the exercises just for those particular areas. Spend a few minutes relaxing your mind. You can do this by picturing a pleasant, peaceful scene in your mind.

IMPORTANT POINTS:

Remember the full benefits of relaxation come with practise. Do not give up if you do not feel the benefits after your first few sessions.

Do not worry about why you are not relaxing as this will cause tension.

Visualisation Relaxation

- Many of our thoughts are filled negatively especially when we are unwell.
- These may include compulsive thoughts, worries and fears and can affect our emotions and our bodies.
- While our bodies generally welcome relaxation our minds can be difficult to “switch off”.
- If we fight our thoughts we create even more tension, therefore we need to learn a way to encourage the mind to let go.
- Visualisation is used to help relax your mind.
- It is based on the principle that you cannot be thinking relaxed, peaceful thoughts if your mind is racing.
- We use our imaginations to create scents of beauty, peace, safety and calm.
- By using these pleasant visual images, we can help control upsetting thoughts and enjoy a deep physical relaxation.

IMPORTANT POINTS:

- Be patient with yourself as you begin to learn to relax your mind. Complete concentration even on pleasant images requires a great deal of practice.
- Do not get upset if unwanted thoughts creep into your mind, this happens to the most practiced people. Try to focus back on the scene that you are in and notice the detail i.e. colour of the flowers in your garden.
- When you come to the end of your session do not stand up straight away as you may experience dizziness. Open your eyes sit up slowly as then remain sitting for a few minutes before standing.

Relaxation Techniques when you are ‘Out and About’

Some ideas to try:

- Relax your breathing, take slow, deep breaths, breath in through your nose and hold it for a few seconds and then breathe out through your mouth.
- If you find it helps, try counting to your breathing. Breathe in 1-2-3, hold 1-2-3. Then breathe out 1-2-3—4 for a slightly longer breath out.
- Stretch your hands down to your feet, hold – release- pause- repeat. This may help release tension in your hands, arm and shoulders.
- Stretch your fingers wide apart- hold- release- pause- repeat.
- Push your opened hands/fingers against your other or a table/wall. Hold- release- pause- repeat.
- Pinch your finger and thumb together hard for a few seconds, then let go.
- Smile- hold- then allow your face to soften and relax.
- Raise your eyebrows towards your hairline, making frown lines- hold- release- feel your forehead soften and relax.
- Relax any part of your body by tensing or stretching the joint- hold- release- pause and then repeat. Feel this part of your body soften and relax.
- Notice if any part of your body is feeling tight or tense and consciously let it drop/soften e.g. shoulder- let them drop and relax.
- Creative visualisation- picture a time when you felt calm, remember what it was like.
- Rehearse a task in your mind beforehand- visualise yourself coping calmly using your relaxation techniques and feeling pleased you have managed it.

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.