

Non-pharmacological therapies for pain

(Eastern services)

Other formats

If you need this leaflet in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service:

- 01392 402093 (for Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter services)
- 01271 314090 (for North Devon services)
- rduh.pals@nhs.net

We know that coming into hospital can be a little daunting. You may be slightly nervous and unsure about what to expect.

Non-pharmacological therapies are non-drug/medication methods for managing/reducing pain and anxiety.

It can be helpful if you are able to reduce any tension or worry that you are experiencing, at home, while you are waiting to be admitted and during your hospital stay.

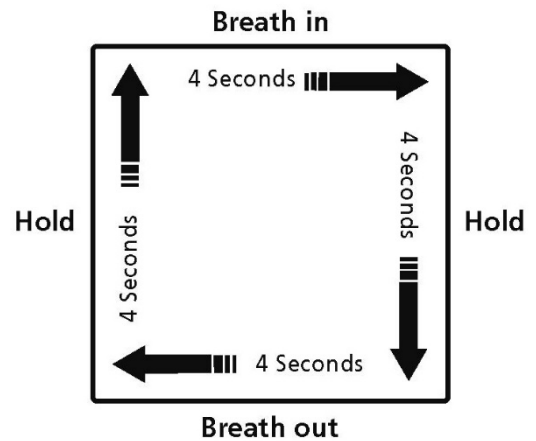
Relaxation and distraction techniques can help you feel calmer, relieve stress and decrease pain.

Relaxation techniques

Breathing exercises can help you relax, because they make your body feel like it does when you are already relaxed. Deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body. This is because when you breathe deeply, it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax.

Box or square breathing is a technique which teaches you to take slow, deep, regular breaths by breathing in, holding the breath and holding for four seconds as illustrated in the diagram.

It can heighten performance and concentration while also being a powerful stress reliever.



7 - 11 breathing is a method of deep breathing which helps to activate the body's natural relaxation system (called the parasympathetic nervous system).

This happens during the "out breath" so breathing with longer out-breaths than in-breaths is really effective at producing a feeling of calm. It may also lower your pulse rate and blood pressure, especially if these are raised due to stress, anxiety or pain.

Some people find that counting their breaths distracts them from any pain they may be experiencing.

To try this technique all you need to do is:

1. Breathe in for a count of **7**.
2. Then breathe out for a count of **11**.

If you find it difficult to breathe as slowly as this, reduce the counts to three in and five out, and increase gradually keeping the out breath longer than the in breath.

Guided imagery is a method of relaxation which concentrates the mind on positive images in an attempt to reduce pain, stress and anxiety.

To give guided imagery a try, follow these steps:

- Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down and close your eyes.
- Start by just taking a few deep breaths to help you relax (you could try the square breathing described earlier).
- Picture a setting that is the calmest and most relaxing that you can imagine. This could be a beach, by a river, in the forest or any scene that you choose.
- Imagine your scene and make it as detailed as possible. What can you hear, smell and see? Try and add even more detail if you can.
- When you are feeling relaxed, take a few minutes to breathe slowly and feel the calm.
- Then, when you are ready, slowly take yourself out of the scene and back to the present.

- Count to three, and open your eyes. Take note of how you are now feeling.

It may help to have some audio recordings to follow.

Here is a web link and a QR code which will direct you to some audio recordings which you may like to use. You can download them to your device so you can practice at home before a hospital admission or use as an inpatient through headphones.

www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/services/pain-management/pain-management-service-outpatients-east/



Once on the webpage please click on the supporting you section.

We recommend trying one or two of the following but you may find there are others that you prefer. Experiment and find which works best for you.

- Calm place
- Mountain meditation
- Three-minute breathing space
- Leaves on a stream

Music is known to be a powerful relaxant. In fact, listening to music just before surgery or during admission to hospital will make you far less anxious because it will distract you as well as help you to feel relaxed. Your personal taste in music will help you choose what you what type of music you listen to. Have a device with a playlist available that includes music which you find relaxing and uplifting. Make sure that the device is properly charged and that you either have enough mobile data to listen to it, or you have downloaded the music to listen offline.

A British band has worked with sound therapists to create a tune described by scientists as the “most relaxing song ever.” It is called *Weightless* by Macaroni Union.

Distraction methods

Finding some methods of distraction which are suited to you can be extremely useful. Distraction helps by removing the focus/your attention from any pain you are experiencing onto an activity that you find enjoyable.

Examples are:

- Reading
- Listening to Audiobooks or Podcasts. You can borrow audiobooks from local libraries and download podcasts for free from various different platforms.
- Listening to free hospital radio (if you have a bedside machine)
- Colouring
- Crochet or knitting
- Puzzles e.g. crosswords
- Listening to music
- TV/film
- Having visitors

You will feel the most benefit if you find pleasure in the activity you choose. Have a think about what will be right for you personally.

Chaplaincy

The chaplaincy is a small hospital department responsible for supporting the pastoral, spiritual and religious care of patients and their carers. Their support may include:

- just being alongside people with a listening ear
- offering specific religious support such as prayer or Holy Communion
- assisting with finding support from local faith communities.

The chaplaincy centre is situated on Level 2 Area O and is always open for use as a quiet space for patients and their visitors. There is an area set aside with prayer mats and there are ablution/washing facilities for the use by Muslims who wish to pray. There is also a wide range of faith and reading resources.

The nurse looking after you can contact the chaplaincy team or you are welcome to do so yourself.

Tel: 01392 402024

Email: rde-tr.chaplaincy@nhs.net

Urgent Contact via switchboard, ask for 'on call chaplain'

Your notes

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern, please contact PALS:

- 01392 402093 (for Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter services)
- 01271 314090 (for North Devon services)
- rduh.pals@nhs.net

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Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

You can also share your feedback on the Care Opinion website at www.careopinion.org.uk or freephone 0800 122 3135.



Scan the QR code to visit the Care Opinion website →

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