

Non-Pharmacological Therapies for Pain Management

Coming into hospital can be a little daunting. You may be slightly nervous and unsure about what to expect.

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

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

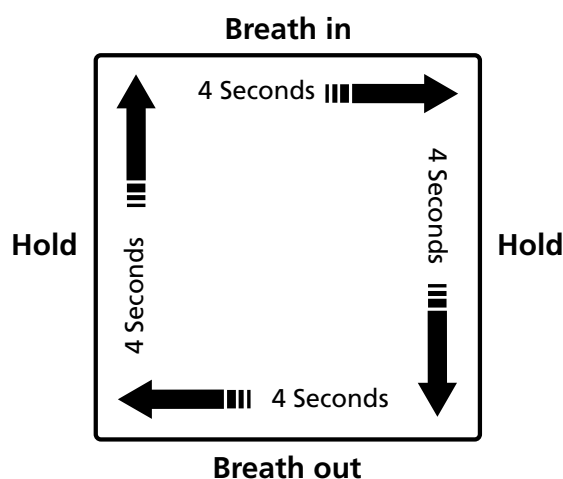
Relaxation techniques

Breathing exercises

help relieve stress and tension by simulating a calmer state. 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 coaches you to take slow, deep, regular breaths by breathing in, holding the breath for four seconds and then breathing out to the count of four as shown in this 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 occurs during the "out breath" so a breathing technique with longer out-breaths than in-breaths is really effective at producing a feeling of calmness. 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 which can be beneficial too.

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 that it is difficult to lengthen your breaths then reduce the count to breathing in for 3 and out to 5, the goal is for the out breath to be 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. 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 3, 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 practise at home before a hospital admission or use as an inpatient through headphones.

www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/services/pain-management/outpatient-clinic-services



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

Music

is known to be a powerful relaxant. In fact, listening to music just before surgery or during a hospital stay 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 determine what type of music you need to 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 that 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 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 facilities for the use of 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'

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by Royal Devon staff undertaking procedures at the Royal Devon hospitals.

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