

Summary

The hypersensitive area, if left untreated, can worsen and become more sensitive over time so it is important that the desensitisation programs are completed daily.

Try to use your hand as normally as you can and incorporate the techniques outlined into your daily activities.

It is important to increase the stimulus to more irritating textures and materials regularly.

This programme is most effective with a “little and often” approach.

Developed by Occupational Therapy Department
CHI
2022

Remember: Ask your Occupational Therapist if you are unsure about anything about your child’s care.

Additional instructions

OT Name/Contact details



Children’s Health Ireland

Desensitisation



Occupational Therapy Department



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What is Hypersensitivity?

After an injury or operation, nerves within the skin can sometimes become overly sensitive. Stimulation to the skin in that area such as touch or pressure, can feel unpleasant or even painful. This leaflet provides you with information about how to help reduce these feelings of discomfort and pain.

Desensitisation is a treatment technique used to reduce how sensitive an area is to a particular touch/texture or stimulus. It helps to normalise the body's response to normal, everyday sensations.

By stimulating the nerves with normal sensations, we teach them to produce a normal response to touch, texture and temperature.

Try the desensitisation techniques on your other, unaffected side so that you know how they should feel.

Start with lighter, less bothersome textures and stimuli initially. Some of the main treatments will now be discussed in more detail.



Massage

Using a hand cream or lotion, massage the sensitive area in a circular direction. If there is swelling, elevate the area and massage in a downward direction. Try massage the area 3 times daily at a minimum.

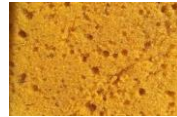


Textures

Gradually stimulate the sensitive area with soft non-irritating textures e.g. felt, fur, wool and progress to more irritating textures e.g. cotton, leather, sandpaper. Use your clothes and textures that are easily available. With younger children, try incorporate this into play e.g., teddies, dressing dolls, messy food play, sponges



Towel



Sponge



Scourer

Tapping

Use a repetitive activity such as tapping the affected area with finger or pencil to cause vibration and percussion to the nerve endings. Tap the affected part on soft and then harder surfaces and with more speed.



Immersion massage

Fill a lunchbox with lentils, rice grains, sand or cornflakes. Place finger or hand in the container and stir around for three minutes. Objects can be hidden for retrieval. Change texture regularly to a more uncomfortable one. Again, make it fun for younger children and turn things into a game i.e.: find the lego hidden in the rice.



Warm and cold water

Using a basin of cold water and a basin of warm (not hot) water, place affected area in the cold water for 20 seconds and then transfer it to the warm water for 20 seconds and then back to the cold water.

Try to use your hand as normally as you can and incorporate these techniques into your daily activities

