

Spasticity and its Management

Information for patients

This leaflet provides information to patients on how to manage spasticity.

What is spasticity?

Spasticity is abnormal muscle stiffness or over-activity in a group or groups of muscles. The over-activity in the muscles is due to a disturbance in the messages coming from the brain and spinal cord due to injury or disease.

Spasticity can cause muscle tightness, difficulty in movement, muscle tiredness, spasm and fatigue. Due to the stiffness, hygiene or movement may be difficult and cause pain, however it is important to remember that some spasticity can be useful and help with function.

What makes spasticity worse?

Many things can influence spasticity. A trigger is an unpleasant sensation or stimulation in the body that worsens your spasticity and or spasm. Managing factors that trigger your spasticity can help ease the symptoms and spasms without needing any changes to your medication. Being able to identify these triggers is important in managing your symptoms.

Common Triggers

- Bladder Problems e.g. Urinary Tract Infection or the bladder not emptying properly
- Bowel Problems e.g. Constipation or Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Skin Problems e.g. Irritation or pressure areas
- Infections
- Pain and discomfort
- Excessive fatigue
- Extremes of temperature
- Emotions e.g. stress and anxiety.

How can I Manage my Spasticity?

Spasticity is managed using a combination of different approaches including:

- Exercise
- Physiotherapy
- Positioning
- Stretching
- Splinting
- Medication
- Surgery (rarely)

It is important that a full assessment of the impact of your symptoms on your everyday function is completed and that any factors that trigger the stiffness or spasm are minimised.

Physical Management Strategies

Spasticity can cause muscles to shorten and joints to stiffen which can then increase the muscle overactivity. It is important to follow any advice given to you to help prevent problems developing.

Your therapist can guide you in exercises tailored to your needs but it is your responsibility to carry these out. Although it is important to exercise you must do the correct type of exercise as strenuous or fast activities may increase the tone.

You may be issued with a splint or shown some positions to rest in. It is important that these are incorporated into your daily routine as they need to be done regularly to manage your symptoms.

Medication

There are many different types of medication that can be used to complement the physical management of your symptoms. The method of administering these will depend on the nature of your symptoms.

- Tablets work on the entire body e.g. Baclofen, Tizanidine, Clonazepam
- Injections target the medication to a specific muscle or group of muscles e.g. Botulinum Toxin, Peripheral Nerve Block
- Implantable device e.g. Baclofen Pump, this is generally used when oral medication is not effective.

What do I need to do before I attend the clinic?

Prior to attending the clinic at Hillingdon Hospital it is worth answering the following questions:

- Where do I experience stiffness/spasms?
- How does the stiffness/spasm affect me?
- Does the stiffness or spasm vary during the day?
- What makes my symptoms worse?
- Is there anything I do to reduce the stiffness/spasm?
- Does the stiffness/spasm cause any pain?
- What am I UNABLE to do because of the stiffness/spasm?
- Does the stiffness/spasm HELP me do anything?
- Is the stiffness/spasm disturbing my sleep?

Please bring a list of current medication with you to the appointment.

My Management Plan (to be completed in clinic).

Goal of Intervention:

Treatment Plan:

Date of next review:

Who should I contact if I have a problem or question?

For more information, please contact the clinic co-ordinator on 01895 279278.

What should I do in case of an emergency?

Please consult you GP or 999 depending on the nature of the emergency.

Languages/ Alternative Formats

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format.

Please contact: 01895 279973

Fadlan waydii haddii aad warbixintan ku rabto luqad ama hab kale. Fadlan la xidhiidh 01895 279 973

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Jeżeli chciałbyś uzyskać te informacje w innym języku, w dużej czcionce lub w formacie audio, poproś pracownika oddziału o kontakt z biurem informacji pacjenta (patient information) pod numerem telefonu: 01895 279973.

如果你需要這些資料的其他語言版本、大字体、或音頻格式，請致電01895 279 973 查詢。

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