

Other suggestions

- ✓ Get some fresh air and take regular walks.
- ✓ Go swimming (or even just relax in the pool).
- ✓ Remember that every activity you do using your affected hand is an important part of your rehabilitation.

Your Occupational Therapist is:

Tel no: 01926 600818 option 5

Monday – Friday, 8am – 4pm

Author: Adapted with kind permission of M.Trickett (OT, Bradford)

As a key provider of healthcare and as an employer, the Trust has a statutory obligation to promote and respect equality and human rights. This is set out in various pieces of legislation including: Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Disability Discrimination Act (2005), Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and the Age Discrimination Act (2006)

Our information for patients can also be made available in other languages, Braille, audio tape, disc or in large print

We offer a Patient Advice Liaison Service (PALS). This is a confidential service for patients and their families to help with any questions or concerns about local health services.

You can contact the service by the direct telephone line on 01926 600054 or using the phone links which are available or by calling in at the office located in the main entrance at Warwick hospital.

SWH- 00662

Publication date: May 2012

Review date: February 2023



South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Hand & Upper Limb Service

***Coping with Complex
Regional Pain Syndrome***

Patient Information

The impact of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)

CRPS is a condition that can be difficult to treat due to its unknown cause. Research is ongoing and current treatments are based on the evidence available.

It is quite natural to feel frustrated and confused by the condition. You may feel low in mood and experience a full range of emotions during your recovery e.g., anger, grief, depression, tearfulness, anxiety, fearfulness, stress etc.

In response to insensitive comments or genuine enquiry you might want to simply state that you have developed a rare form of arthritis or say that your nerves have reacted abnormally to the injury (e.g. when CRPS follows a fractured wrist). Don't feel that you have to try and explain what is going on to everyone who asks.

It is likely that all your immediate family will be impacted by your condition and there will be difficult adjustments to be made, sometimes in every part of life. For example:

- not being able to work or participate in pastimes
- having less patience
- having reduced concentration
- not wanting to socialise etc.

It is important to acknowledge these changes and support each other as best as you are able. Share information; get support where you can, get in touch with someone who is a good listener.

The worst thing you can do is bottle it all up.

If you feel overwhelmed by your condition or emotions please get in touch with your therapist and/or your GP.

Tips on coping strategies

As you are encouraged to use your affected hand as normally as possible, please consider the following:

- ✓ Actively participate in your therapy programme and use your medications routinely even if your progress seems painfully slow.
- ✓ Continue to touch, look at, use and love your arm and hand, regardless of how it feels.
- ✓ Don't try to take on something that you know is too difficult and then get all the negative repercussions. Try to break the task into manageable chunks.
- ✓ Balance rest, exercise and activity as much as possible.
- ✓ Think about the things that you **can** do and focus on these.
- ✓ Find activities that are enjoyable and/or distracting and do these as much as practical.
- ✓ Make a note of the things that improve your pain and refer to the list when the pain has increased. Your therapist can help with this.
- ✓ Try to identify the factors that trigger your symptoms: stress, strong food, frustration etc. It may be possible to find ways to prevent or lessen the possibility of a "flare up".
- ✓ Remember that some symptom triggers are actually good for you in other ways, such as practical and social activities. Before avoiding any activity try to weigh up the short term gains (less effort, less pain etc.) with the long term consequences (low self-esteem, reduced quality of life, becoming weaker etc.).
- ✓ Find ways to help yourself relax. This may be a breathing technique or a place to retreat to. Your therapist may be able to help you with this.