

Psychological Care

Caring for you during your hospital stay

Patient Information Leaflet

Psychological care

We understand that being in hospital can be extremely difficult and distressing. The experience of physical illness may leave us feeling as though we have little control over our lives. It often means hearing some painful news regarding your future and making some difficult decisions. For many, there can be ongoing uncertainty about what the future holds.

It is natural to be worried when you are physically unwell. It is also very common to feel anxious and fearful. These feelings may be with you all the time, or they may come and go quite suddenly. All feelings can become very intense and it is common to feel sadness, anger and worry. Other effects can include memory and concentration difficulties, exhaustion and lack of motivation.

Whatever your thoughts and feelings, it is important to know that it is natural, if rather unpleasant, for these powerful feelings to happen at the same time that you are facing illness and physical symptoms.

Knowing that they are common may help them to seem more normal and not to be feared. It is also important to know that they

will pass.

Being away from familiar surroundings and people can intensify these difficulties and could really knock you off balance.

How to manage your hospital stay

There are a few things which may help you to cope when in hospital:

- Stay in touch with friends and family.
- Ask your doctors the questions you would like answered, using written prompts if needed.
- Ask for what you need and be open about the difficulties you are having – if you are afraid, say so; if you are in pain, tell the right nurse.
- Be positive in the way you talk to yourself and try not to focus on the possibilities of what can go wrong e.g. “many people have coped well with this test, and so will I”.
- Set small, manageable targets for each day – these can be very helpful in lifting your mood, improving your confidence and distracting you from worrying thoughts. Simply knowing you can distract yourself for short periods of time can give you back a sense of control and help you get through the more difficult parts of your day. You may need to plan ahead and rotate a number of different strategies.
- Use distraction – get busy, focus on the present, remember or imagine and exercise your mind (e.g. puzzles, games, music).

Everyone has their own way of coping in times of difficulty. You will find that you have your own strengths to draw on. What has helped you with other challenges in the past?

Do not get carried away – many patients find that they do not have the energy or concentration needed to do all the things they planned to do. So do not be too hard on yourself and do not worry if you are

having a bad day. Just do what is best for you and take one day at a time.

Specialist psychological support

You may feel that you would benefit from additional support. The Physical Health Psychology Service provides specialist psychological support to people with a chronic and life-limiting illness.

Physical health psychologists are trained and professionally qualified to help people with a range of issues, particularly related to the consequences of medical conditions and treatments on an individual's life.

A psychologist can work with a person, their family, and their doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers to develop the person's own strategies and resources, and perhaps find new ones to help manage the distress and emotional and practical consequences of unwanted and painful change.

Meeting with a psychologist would provide an opportunity to explore your thoughts and feelings with us, and identify what changes may be possible. This may involve learning new skills and approaches to solving problems. It can be a positive opportunity to talk with someone specially trained, particularly when some thoughts and feelings are difficult to share with those you are close to.

If you would like to know more about our service, or you feel that you might benefit from seeing a psychologist, please speak to your doctor or nurse. They will make a referral, and we will then make contact with you directly.

It may be that you would like to be seen during your admission or at a later date, after you have returned home. Please let us know what you would prefer.

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Physical Health Psychology Service on 01384 366249

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/end-of-life-care/patient-information-leaflets/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru vă rugăm să sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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