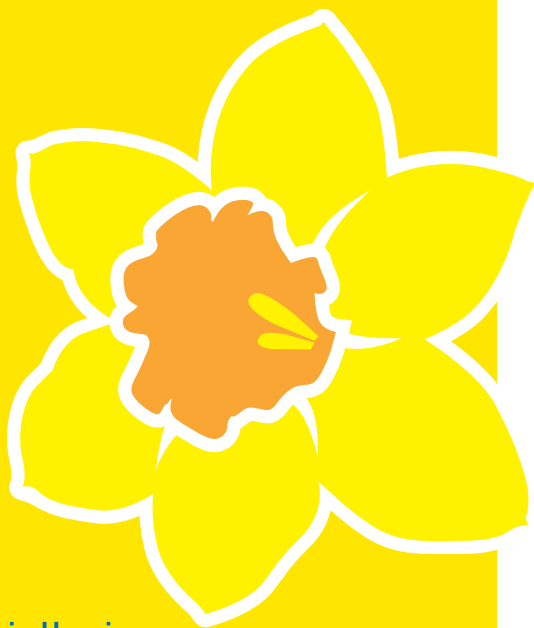


Patient and carer information

Relaxation



Marie Curie Hospice



Marie Curie
Cancer Care



How can relaxation help me?

Learning simple relaxation techniques may help you to improve how you feel and help you to cope with stressful situations.

Relaxation techniques can help in:

- reducing feelings of anxiety and depression
- aiding sleep
- the management of pain
- the management of breathlessness
- coping with the side effects of treatment
- preventing and reducing feelings of panic

You may not realise that you are tense and just how this can affect your body and mind. You may also forget how good it feels to be relaxed.

Learning how to relax will help you recognise the early signs of stress and tension, and help when you begin to feel anxious, stressed or breathless. The techniques are easy to learn and practise.

How do I relax?

Simple muscle relaxation

These techniques aim to reduce the tension in your muscles and can be useful in everyday situations. To be of real use, build them into your everyday life. They may help you to cope, so that when something stressful comes along, you will be able to draw on your new relaxation skills.

You can use simple muscle relaxation just about anywhere: in bed or sitting in a doctor's surgery. The aim is to tense up and then relax - allowing blood to flow through the muscles to release tension.

To begin

- Find a quiet place, preferably away from drafts and distractions.
- Make sure you are sitting or lying comfortably.
- Play soft music or just sit in silence.
- Focus on a pleasant picture or close your eyes.
- Become aware of your breathing; check you are breathing at a slow steady rate and avoid the temptation to hold your breath.

Hands

The hands are one of the first parts of our bodies to show tension. When we are tense we tend to clench our hands, make a fist, clasp hands together or hold onto something tightly.

When this happens, stretch out your hands so that your fingers are straight and spread out. Hold the position for a few moments and feel the tension across your palms and the backs of your hands. Slowly let your hands relax and drop them to your side or onto your lap. When your hands relax they will feel much lighter and the fingers will gently curve.

Shoulders

Gently draw your shoulders up towards your ears and hold them there for a few moments. Lower your shoulders gently back to their usual position. Again, you will feel the tension reduce and the shoulders should feel lighter.

Relaxing thoughts

This is a form of day dreaming where you distract your mind away from stressful thoughts and situations and instead think about something pleasant, such as a happy memory, a sunny day on the beach, laughter, or sitting in a beautiful garden.

- Think of a real situation or a dream place, somewhere you would like to be and where you can imagine yourself relaxing and putting aside your worries.
- Gradually visualise the details of this place, its sights, sounds and smells. Feel yourself unwinding before gradually returning to the present, slowly bringing with you the positive energy and feelings of warmth and safety.

What if I still feel stressed?

If you are feeling stressed and the techniques in this sheet do not help, talk to someone about how you feel. This may be someone close to you, such as your family or friends. Alternatively, talk to your nurse or doctor who will be able to support you.

For links to websites about cancer care, information and support, visit our website:

www.mariecurie.org.uk/patientsandcarers

Support us

Our services are always free to patients and families but we can only continue our work through the generosity of our supporters. Find out how you can support us through donations, volunteering, events, or leaving a legacy in your will. Phone: **0800 716 146**, visit: www.mariecurie.org.uk or **talk to the hospice fundraiser.**

Your local Marie Curie Hospice actively promotes quality of life for people with cancer and other illnesses and provides support for their families, completely free.

