



Contrast bathing for hand and wrist injuries

Information for patients from the Hand Therapy Service

After injury and surgery, the small blood vessels found around wounds do not drain excess fluid as well as before and the area becomes swollen. It takes several months before the network is fully repaired.

Until this happens you can help your tissues drain fluid in several ways.

1. Keep your hand elevated (raised) to heart level when not using it during the day.
2. Complete your exercises, as shown by your hand therapist.
3. Elevate and pump your hand if it feels stiff and swollen.

What is contrast bathing?

Contrast bathing is a technique which stimulates the circulation to your hand. This results in a change in your blood flow, which in turn helps decrease the swelling and makes your hand easier to move.

Only use contrast bathing when your wound is healed and all stitches have been removed. If you have dissolvable stitches then please start using contrast bathing when advised by your therapist.



What do I need to do?

- Using two containers or a sink/washing up bowl, fill one with warm water and the other with icy cold water.
- Place your hand first in the warm water, gently stretch your hand, and then make a fist 10 times.
- Swap to the icy cold water and rest your hand for a minute.
- Repeat this up to 10 times, finish in the warm water.
- If your swelling is significant, complete this process four times a day. Otherwise be guided by your therapist.

What if I have any questions or concerns?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your treatment please call the **Hand Therapy Service on 01227 78 30 65**.

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patientinformation