

If you are an outpatient the health psychologist will normally write to the person that referred you to the health psychology service and your GP (General Practitioner) after your first session and then when you have finished your sessions. This is to give them a summary of your progress and to let them know of any issues that they may be able to help you with. These letters will always be discussed with you and you will be able to have copies of them if you ask.

All information from your sessions, diaries you keep, and letters to professionals are kept in a secure environment and are subject to the Data Protection Act (this Act gives individuals certain rights regarding information held about them). You can see information about your sessions by writing to the health psychology service giving specific information about your request.

How do I contact the health psychology service?

We have health psychology services for adults at both hospitals. You can contact them by telephoning:

Harefield hospital: 01895 823 737 extension 5259 (team administrator)

Royal Brompton hospital: 020 7351 8079 (team secretary)

The health psychology service is open Monday to Friday from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. (excluding bank holidays).

A separate psychology service is available for paediatric patients (children) and their families. Your medical team can give you further information and advice about how to contact this service.

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Sydney Street
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tel: 020 7352 8121

Harefield Hospital
Hill End Road
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Coping with health problems and illness: the adult Health Psychology Service



Living with physical health problems can be difficult and at times you may find it hard to cope with your health, illness or treatment. During these times you might find it helpful to speak to a health professional such as a health psychologist. A health psychologist is specially trained to help people cope with the emotional effects of physical health problems. Our health psychology service is available to patients and also their partners and family members. We are aware of the emotional strains that partners and family members experience and we hope that our service can help them and also help them to support you.

You may want to consider seeing a health psychologist if:

- You are having difficulties coming to terms with, or accepting, aspects of your illness or diagnosis
- Changes to your everyday life caused by illness make it more difficult to cope
- You are worried about your stay in hospital or plans for going home
- After leaving hospital, you are having difficulty adjusting and getting back to everyday life.

What sort of issues can a health psychologist help with?

- Low mood, anxiety and stress associated with illness and treatment
- Coping with uncertainty about future health and treatment
- Fears and worries about returning home after a stay in hospital
- Keeping control and independence over daily activities
- Adjusting to everyday life and the recovery process after surgery

- Coping with medication and making decisions about treatment
- Worries about family problems
- Problems with memory and concentration.

Coping with illness and treatment

A common reason why patients or their family members want to see a health psychologist is to help them to cope with feelings associated with serious health problems and hospital treatment. Although it is normal to experience worry, disbelief and shock when you first hear information about your health and future treatment, these feelings do not usually last long. If these feelings continue, get worse or become overwhelming then this is a useful time to think about asking for psychological support. It is not good for you to feel low, depressed or distressed over a long period of time.

How do I contact the health psychology service?

• Inpatients

If you are an inpatient you can ask a member of staff to make an appointment with a health psychologist at a convenient time. You do not have to give detailed information about why you want to see a health psychologist although some basic background information is helpful.

• Outpatients

If you are an outpatient you can contact your hospital doctor or the outpatient clinic and ask them to write a referral letter to the service on your behalf. An appointment will be organised by the health psychology administrator and will be confirmed in writing when possible.

Regular health psychology clinics are held for outpatients but, if necessary, appointments can be made to co-incide with when you are already visiting the hospital.

What can you expect from the health psychology service?

All sessions are held in quiet confidential rooms. The first session is an opportunity to discuss the reasons why you wanted to speak to a health psychologist and describe any worries and concerns you have. It is also a chance for you to give some background information about yourself. Following this session the health psychologist will agree with you a plan to address your concerns. This may involve:

- Returning for a review session
- Returning for further sessions to work on specific issues
- Being referred to your local community psychology services for further support that is closer to your home.

During and in between sessions the health psychologist may suggest that you complete a questionnaire or a diary to help with understanding your feelings and thoughts. These activities will help to keep track of any changes in your feelings and lifestyle over time and are just for use by you and the health psychologist.

Confidentiality

If you are an inpatient the health psychologist will write a brief summary of the contact they have had with you in your confidential medical record. Detailed discussions will not be included.