

# Seeing a Clinical Psychologist Following Hand Injury

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**Author:** Clinical Psychologist  
**Department:** Clinical Psychology  
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## Introduction

This leaflet is to provide information on the Clinical Psychology service for patients attending Hand Clinic.

## Why does Hand Clinic have a Clinical Psychologist?

A hand injury impacts on an individual physically, but it can also have a psychological and emotional impact.

The psychological impact of an injury will be different for each individual. How an individual copes after their injury can be influenced by many things, including the type of accident that caused the injury, what is happening in their life at the time, any previous health/mental health difficulties they may have had and any previous significant life events they have experienced.

Our Clinical Psychologist can help patients to manage the psychological and emotional effects of their injury.

## What psychological symptoms might I notice after a hand injury?

It is very common for patients to notice a number of symptoms in the first few weeks after a hand injury. This might include:

- Feeling more anxious than usual
- Flashbacks and nightmares – this is feeling like you are going through the traumatic event again. People often see images and sometimes experience smells, sounds and physical sensations such as pain from the traumatic event.
- Avoidance – people often avoid places, people, objects and activities that remind them about what happened.
- Difficulty with sleeping.
- Not wanting to talk to friends and family about what happened.
- Not thinking about what happened OR thinking about it all the time and going over and over it in your mind.
- Difficulty concentrating and remembering things.

## What will happen over time?

For most patients these symptoms will settle down over the first 4 weeks following an accident or injury.

Gradually getting back into your usually routine, as much as possible, will help you to manage these symptoms. It may help to talk through what has happened, with someone you trust, but remember to do this at your own pace.

## What can our Clinical Psychologist help with?

If it has been more than 4 weeks since your injury, and you are finding it difficult to cope, you may benefit from seeing our Clinical Psychologist.

Below are examples of some of the difficulties they can offer support with:

- Feelings of increased anxiety and worry
- Feeling anxious when you are reminded of the accident or injury
- Sleep difficulties
- Managing upsetting and distressing thoughts, including flashbacks and intrusive memories
- Feeling low in mood
- Difficulties coming to terms with your injury
- Concerns about the appearance of your hand, or difficulties looking at your hand
- Anxiety about further treatment or surgery
- Feeling more irritable than usual
- Noticing changes in your personality

## How do I get help?

If it has been 4 weeks after your injury, and you are concerned about how you are feeling and coping, you can ask for a referral to our Clinical Psychologist. The Doctors, Nurses and Physiotherapists in Hand Clinic can make a referral to Clinical Psychology on your behalf.

## What will happen when I see the Clinical Psychologist?

Your first appointment with the Psychologist will be an assessment.

The appointment will last up to an hour. You will be asked about your injury, but we will not ask you give a lot of detail if you do not feel comfortable talking about it. We will ask you about the effect the accident has had on you and your life, and about your history.

At the end of the assessment, we will discuss the different options available to you based on the assessment.

If you are suitable for psychological therapy, and you want to go ahead with this, we would usually see patients fortnightly.

The number of sessions you will need will be discussed with you in your first appointment.

## Contact Details

Dr Charlotte Russell is the Clinical Psychologist who works with patients attending Hand Clinic. She can be contacted on 01744 646864.

Whiston Hospital  
Warrington Road,  
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR  
Telephone: 0151 426 1600

St Helens Hospital  
Marshall Cross Road,  
St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 3DA  
Telephone: 01744 26633

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