

## Relaxation

This leaflet explains how relaxation can help you manage your heart condition.

### Relaxation has many health benefits as well as helping you to:

- ♥ Reduce stress.
- ♥ Cope with problems.
- ♥ Increase your feelings of being in control.
- ♥ Lower your blood pressure and heart rate.

### Talking Therapies relaxation workshop

Talking Therapies has some audio sessions created to help guide you through the relaxation process. Visit <https://talkingtherapies.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/our-therapies/stress-less-workshops/>

### Deep muscle relaxation

This technique takes around 20 minutes. It stretches different muscles in turn and then relaxes them. It releases tension from the body and relaxes your mind.

Do not hold your breath while doing these exercises.

- ♥ Find a warm quiet place with no distractions. Get completely comfortable, either sitting or lying down. Close your eyes and begin by focussing on your breathing; breathing slowly and regularly.
- ♥ If you have pain in certain muscles, or if there are muscles that you find difficult to focus on, spend more time on relaxing other parts.
- ♥ You may want to play some soothing music to help relaxation. As with all relaxation techniques, deep muscle relaxation will require a bit of practice before you start feeling its benefits.
- ♥ For each exercise, hold the stretch for a few seconds, then relax. Repeat a couple of times. It is useful to keep to the same order as you work through the muscle groups.

**Face:** push your eyebrows together, as though frowning. Release.

**Neck:** gently tilt your head forward, pushing your chin down towards your chest. Slowly lift it up again.

**Shoulders:** pull them up towards your ears (shrug), and then relax them down towards the floor.

**Chest:** breathe slowly and deeply into your diaphragm (below your bottom rib) so you are using the whole of your lungs. Then breathe slowly out, allowing your belly to deflate as all the air is exhaled.

**Arms:** stretch the arms away from the body, reach, and then relax.

**Legs:** push your toes away from the body, then pull them towards you, then relax.

**Wrists and hands:** stretch the wrist by pulling the hand up towards you. Stretch out the fingers and thumbs, and then relax.

### Useful contacts

Royal Berkshire Hospital            0118 322 5111  
Cardiac Reception Enquiries        0118 322 6515  
British Heart Foundation:            [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)

More information is available on the Trust website [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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