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**Abdominal massage for neurogenic  
bowel dysfunction in patients with  
Multiple sclerosis**

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**Patient Information  
Leaflet  
Abdominal Massage**

**Introduction**

You have agreed to take part in a research study being undertaken by the Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Research Unit, (NMAPH) based at Glasgow Caledonian University.

You have been randomised to the group that will be taught how to undertake the abdominal massage

**Who will do the massage?**

In some cases the massage can be undertaken by yourself, but in most cases it is better if someone else can also do it for you.

**How long does it take?**

The whole procedure should take around 15 minutes, that includes some time to get ready

**How often does the massage have to be undertaken?**

We recommend every day, especially at the beginning but if you miss a day it will not mean you will go back to how you were before. Everyone is different

**Will it hurt?**

You will be aware of firm pressure but it should not hurt. Quite often people comment that it is relaxing.

**What position should I be in?**

The best position is lying on your back with your head, neck and knees supported. This may not be possible for all patients, so a semi-reclined position is acceptable.

### **Do I have to get undressed?**

No, your tummy area has to be exposed, but you do not have to take off your clothes. It is sometimes good to tuck a towel just below your bust/nipple line and one in to the top of your pants. This will protect your clothes from the massage oil.

### **How will I, or my carer be taught?**

You will be taught when you attend your appointment, which will either be on the same day after your routine clinic appointment or one specific to this study. The nurse will have received special training in the massage. There will be DVD showing the massage to watch first, then the nurse will do the massage on you, then get your carer, or yourself to do the massage. You will get a copy of the DVD to take home with you.

There are 4 basic strokes with the massage lasting about 10 minutes.

1. Stroking commences from the small of the back and follows the, over the top of the hip bone, and down both sides of the pelvis towards the groin.
2. Effleurage follows the direction of the movement of content of the gut, up the right hand side, across and down the patient's left hand side. This is also repeated several times with increasing pressure
3. Palmar Kneading tracks down the left side, up the right side and down the right side again. Effleurage is repeated and continued with a relaxing transverse stroke over the abdomen.
4. Vibration over the abdominal wall to relieve flatus concludes the massage session.

This will be much easier to visualise when you see the DVD and watch the nurse.

### **Is there a set time of the day that is best to do the massage?**

It is always good to establish a routine of when you may go to the toilet. For example the most usual time to go to the toilet is in the morning, after breakfast and this is when the gastro-colic reflex is usually strong. If this sometimes works for you then doing the massage say 30 minutes before your breakfast might be helpful. Other people go at different times of the day, and sometimes it is helpful to take a drink of water or hot orange juice before the massage.

### **Will there be any side effects?**

Occasionally patients may have slight cramps or experience passing wind more often. This is quite normal and shows that the massage is working.

### **What happens if the person doing the massage forgets how to do it?**

It is helpful to have the DVD playing at the same time on a screen you can see when doing the massage. It can take several attempts before feeling at all competent when doing the massage. Just remember you cannot do any harm, the important thing is to try and do the massage every day.

### **My carer is not very strong, does that matter?**

No the massage should be firm but not excessively so. A lot of the stimulus to the bowel is through sensory touch, to stimulate the bowel itself. We are not trying to push the contents of the bowel along.

We will show the carer the best way to stand to avoid straining their back. It will also be important that the patient is not lying on too low a bed or couch.

### **I want to try and do the massage myself, will that be allowed?**

Yes, we will try and adapt a way that you can do it to yourself, perhaps lying in a recliner. If you have one hand stronger than the other we will show how to adapt the massage. Also, sometimes using something like a tennis ball can help.

### **How soon will I see any benefit?**

Some people report benefit quite soon, after maybe 1 or 2 massages, in some it takes longer, perhaps 1-2 weeks. The important thing is to keep trying to do it as it can be accumulative effect, gradually building up the speed that the bowel moves the contents along, thus decreasing the amount of water absorbed and making a softer stool.

### **If it works do I have to keep doing it?**

This is unknown, most patients tend to establish their own regimen and get to know how often they need to do it. It tends to decrease the amount of time a person needs to sit on the toilet, so getting into the way of doing the massage at a time of the day that suits you is usually best.

### **What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the massage?**

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If you do decide to withdraw from the study, we will use the information already collected up to that point only with your consent.

### **What if there is a problem?**

The person who taught you the massage will be phoning you every week for the 6 weeks of the study and is happy to discuss any concerns or problems you may have. In addition you may contact Doreen McClurg the chief investigator at any time (07773984594) as she has experience in undertaking similar studies, and is experienced in massage techniques.

### **Who is organising and funding the research?**

The following groups have reviewed this study and given their approval for it to be carried out:

West of Scotland Research Ethics Committee  
Each local NHS Board Research & Development department.

### **Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

Yes. This study will be carried out in accordance with good practice guidelines relating to patient confidentiality and data protection. All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential. Paper records will be kept in a locked cupboard, computerised data will be kept on a password protected computer and only researchers involved in this study will be permitted to access them.

Taking part in this study does not affect your normal legal rights. Whether or not you do take part, you will retain the same legal rights as any other patient in the NHS (which includes professional indemnity insurance for negligence.).

Separate information leaflet will be given to those selected for interview. Please note the audio recordings will be destroyed following transcription.

You will be asked to complete a bowel diary at the start and 23 weeks into the study and further questionnaires will be sent to you at 6 weeks and at 24 weeks into the study.

You will not be paid any expenses for your involvement in this study, however a five pound gift voucher will be sent to you with your final questionnaire.

### Contact for further information

If you require any further information about the study please do not hesitate to contact;

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If you would like information about research more generally please contact;

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**Thank you for reading and considering taking part in this research.**

### Participant Pathway Diagram

