

## Patient information factsheet

# Contrast bathing

We have written this factsheet to give you information about what contrast bathing is and how to do it. We hope it will answer some of the questions you may have, but if there is anything you don't understand, a member of your healthcare team will be happy to explain further.

### What is contrast bathing?

Contrast bathing is an effective treatment and can help with swelling, pain, joint stiffness and joint inflammation. Contrast bathing stimulates the contraction (narrowing) and dilation (widening) of the blood vessels by alternating hot baths with cold baths. The opening and closing of the blood vessels helps to reduce swelling in your hand and improve circulation.

### Equipment

You will need:

- two bowls (large enough to put your whole hand in)
- ice cubes
- hot and cold water supply

### Contrast bathing method

1. Fill one bowl with ice cubes and cold water. Fill the other bowl with hot water.
2. Put your whole hand in cold water for about 30 seconds, then switch to the hot water for about 30 seconds.
3. Continue switching between the bowls seven times. Always start and finish in the cold water.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times per day.

Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Contact us

If you need more advice about contrast bathing, please contact us at:

Hand therapy team  
Therapy outpatients  
B level  
West Wing  
Southampton General Hospital  
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Telephone: **023 8120 6459**

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or audio, please call 023 8120 4688 for help.