

Cardiac psychology service

Information for patients

The cardiac psychology service is available to cardiac rehabilitation patients at the Royal Free Hospital and other patients who are under the care of a Royal Free Hospital cardiology consultant.

How can the psychology service help me?

When you are diagnosed with a heart problem or experience a cardiac event (such as a heart attack) it may affect you emotionally in a variety of ways. While some people report no emotional differences, others report experiences such as:

- shock, confusion or feeling overwhelmed
- anxiety and/or panic attacks
- low mood
- concern about treatment, procedures or operations
- worry about the future, fear about ill health and dying
- anger
- feelings of loss
- concern about personal relationships and/or worry about sexuality
- fear of upsetting friends and family.

For some people, having health problems can bring up difficult memories from a long time ago or other problems in their life can make it more difficult to manage cardiac problems. The list is not exhaustive and these feelings are not unusual. Often they pass with time; however, for some they can persist and be distressing. The cardiac psychology service we provide may help you make sense of your experience, provide a space to talk and help reduce the impact on your life.

How can I arrange a cardiac psychology referral?

To arrange a referral to the cardiac psychology team you can speak to a member of staff on the ward, the cardiac rehabilitation team in person or by phone on 020 7830 2871, or talk to your cardiology consultant and they will contact the service for you.

The cardiac psychology clinic currently runs on Tuesday afternoons and Wednesday and Fridays mornings.

What happens once I am referred to the cardiac psychologist?

Following your referral we will arrange an initial 50 minute assessment appointment. During this session you will have the opportunity to discuss the issues that are concerning you. You can attend this appointment alone or with your partner, family members or carer.

You and the psychologist will then decide together on the best course of action. It might be that you arrange to meet the psychologist for a number of sessions to work towards goals that are specifically tailored to your needs. Alternatively, a community based service may be the best place to meet your needs and the psychologist can help you access this.

Further information

If you would like to discuss anything contained in this information leaflet or would like to know more about how the psychology service works, please contact Dr Lucy Gorvin: 020 7794 0500 extension 31060

We welcome feedback about our service and we support the patient advice and liaison service (PALS). PALS can be contacted if you have a problem with any of our services, need advice or information about local services or suggestions for improvements. You can call PALS on 020 7472 6447 or contact them via their online form:

www.royalfree.nhs.uk/contact-us

For more information about alternative talking therapies available in your area, visit the NHS Choices website for contact details of your nearest IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) service or speak to your GP. If you are feeling distressed and need to speak to someone out of hours, please contact Samaritans on 08457 90 90 90 or call 111 for advice.

For more information about living with a heart condition see British Heart Foundation website: www.bhf.org.uk

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or require a list of references for it, please email: rf.communications@nhs.net

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please ask a member of staff.

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