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## Imperial Cardiovascular Health and Rehabilitation Service

# Cardiac Psychology

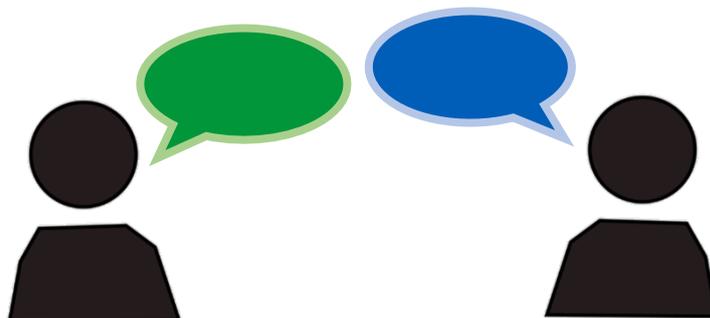
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You may have asked for some help, or a member of the cardiac rehabilitation team may have suggested that you see a psychologist. This leaflet aims to help you understand what to expect.

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### What is a psychologist?

Psychologists are trained to understand the psychological effects of physical health problems and can offer talking therapies to help patients work through their problems.



### Why might I see a psychologist?

Receiving a cardiac diagnosis or having a cardiac event can lead to many different feelings. It is common for people to report feeling low and anxious about their diagnosis and their health moving forwards. People can also find it difficult to adjust to living with a cardiac condition or a device such as an ICD. Generally, these difficult feelings tend to pass in time. However, when these feelings persist and begin to interfere with day-to-day life it can be useful to have psychological support.

It is important to remember that you do not need to have significant mental health difficulties to work with a psychologist. It is just a way of trying to learn new ways of coping with difficulties associated with your cardiac condition.

### Will I find working with a psychologist helpful?

Research has shown that psychological therapy can work well for many people. We asked people for feedback on our service and here are some examples of what they said:

- *“It was helpful to talk to someone outside of the family who understood the physical and emotional aspects of heart disease”.*
- *“The psychologist was very kind, understanding, and supportive from beginning to end”.*

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## What will happen when I see a psychologist?

The psychologist will get in contact to arrange an assessment appointment; this can take place face-to-face or virtually. During the appointment, the psychologist will ask you about your main difficulties and your hopes for support. You may also be asked to fill out some brief questionnaires.

If you and the psychologist feel that psychological therapy could be helpful, you will be offered further appointments. Sometimes, just a few appointments are enough, but at other times more appointments (e.g. eight sessions) may be useful. The appointments last for just under an hour and are held on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

## What does psychological therapy involve?

The psychologist will work with you to create a treatment plan that is tailored to your needs. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is the main type of therapy used because it has been shown to work well with people with health-related difficulties. CBT assumes that what we think (cognitions) and what we do (behaviours) affect how we feel, both emotionally and physically.

## How do I make an appointment with a cardiac psychologist?

You can discuss a referral with your cardiac rehabilitation nurse. If you agree that seeing a psychologist could be helpful, your nurse will make the referral for you.

## What if I need an interpreter?

Psychologists regularly work alongside interpreters. If you would like to have an interpreter present during your appointments this can be arranged for you.

## What about confidentiality?

It can be hard to talk to someone new, especially about personal matters, but the psychologist will try to put you at ease.

Psychologists working in the NHS are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and follow a code of professional conduct that includes confidentiality. However, if you indicate that there is a risk of harm to you or another person, the psychologist has a duty of care to share this information with appropriate agencies.

The person who referred you, your cardiology consultant and your GP will be sent copies of the reports that the psychologist writes. They will treat any information they receive as confidential.

## What if I have more questions?

If you have been referred to us and have any questions before your initial appointment, you can contact us via email: [imperial.clinicalpsychology@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.clinicalpsychology@nhs.net) or telephone: 0208 383 0689.

Alternatively, we will be happy to answer any of your questions in your first appointment with a psychologist.

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## Are there any other services I can access?

The cardiac psychology service is a specialist service that supports people with cardiac related concerns. However, it is common to have psychological concerns in other areas of your life, such as bereavement, relationship difficulties, and anxiety or low mood that pre-date your cardiac condition. These may be better addressed in an alternative community service.

Talking therapy is available in your local borough through the NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service. This is a national service, which offers one-to-one, or group-based psychological therapies, organised by borough. Visit the IAPT website [www.iapt.nhs.uk](http://www.iapt.nhs.uk) or speak to your GP regarding accessing a referral. Many IAPT services also accept self-referrals.

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf. Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints Department, Fourth Floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London, W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: 020 3312 1337 / 1349

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages.

Please email the communications team: [imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net).

## Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk).