

Mirror Visual Feedback *(page 1 of 2)*



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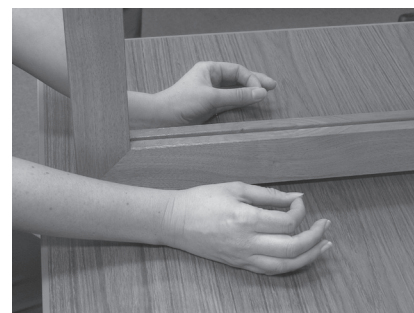
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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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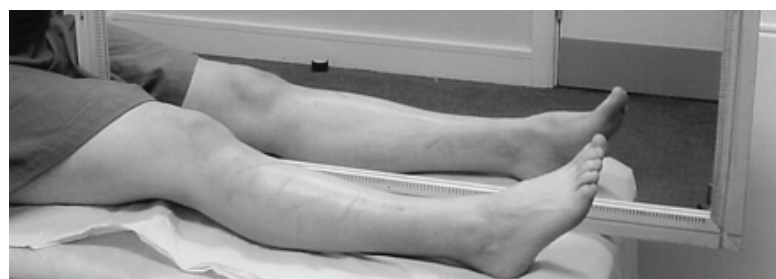
What is Mirror Visual Feedback?

Mirrors have been found to be of use in the treatment of some types of pain including amputee phantom limb pain, Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) and hypersensitivity. They have also been used to manage stiffness and altered patterns of movement.



The exact way in which mirror work helps

is not clear but it is thought that by looking at the reflection of the



unaffected limb the brain is tricked into believing that the painful/affected limb is normal. Over time this helps to alter the messages to the brain which, in turn,

reduces the volume of pain messages being sent to the affected limb and normalises movement patterns.

What should I do?

Mirror Visual Feedback should become part of your planned exercise programme and your therapist will go through the procedure and treatment plan with you. It is best to use mirror work little and often and, like any new technique, it will need practice to get used to it.

- Find a quiet room where you will be able to concentrate and not be interrupted.
- Ensure that you are sitting/lying comfortably with your back well supported.
- Position the mirror so that the reflective surface is facing your unaffected limb and your affected limb is hidden behind the mirror. (See pictures)
- Lean forward so that you are able to see the mirror image of your unaffected limb in the mirror and simply look at this reflection **without moving** either your affected or unaffected limb. Spend a few minutes just concentrating hard on the mirror reflection so that your brain begins to believe that this is your other limb.

Contact: Hand Therapy
Tel: 01722 345530

- Once you are comfortable with this, very SLOWLY start to move BOTH limbs in EXACTLY the same way whilst continuing to look at the reflection in the mirror. It does not matter what movements you choose to do but it is important that both limbs move in EXACTLY the same way. There may be specific exercises that your therapist has prescribed for you that you could perform whilst using the mirror.
- If pain or stiffness becomes a problem or prevents movement of the affected limb then stop and go back to simply looking at the mirror image. Then, without actually moving the affected limb, just IMAGINE that you are moving it in the same manner as the unaffected limb whilst continuing to concentrate on the reflection in the mirror.

Do's and Don'ts

Do

- Use the mirror little and often
- Always move your unaffected and affected limbs in exactly the same way
- Only use these guidelines following consultation with your therapist
- Always work within your pain level

Don't

- Use the mirror for prolonged periods as your concentration levels will drop
- Continue mirror use if your pain increases or you are unable to move your limb

Are there any side effects with this treatment?

Occasionally people feel unusual sensations in the limb that is hidden from their view when using the mirror.

For example the limb may feel

- heavier or lighter,
- warmer or colder,
- as if it is floating

Or you may feel that there is an additional limb

All of these sensations are much less common when both limbs are moving in exactly the same way and should last no more than a few seconds or minutes after you have stopped using the mirror.

If at any time you find a sensation uncomfortable or disturbing then simply stop and view both limbs without the mirror and the sensations should quickly pass.