

CLINICAL HYPNOSIS

Improving your experience of care



Introduction

Clinical hypnosis can help you face certain treatments, situations or difficult periods in life more serenely. To enable you to benefit from it, Geneva University Hospital (HUG) has trained its healthcare staff in this relational approach.

How does hypnosis work?

In the hospital, hypnosis is used to achieve a specific therapeutic goal. It consists of inducing, through words, a modified state of consciousness – also called a “dissociated” state – during which attention becomes focused and you become more receptive to suggestions. The practitioner uses this particular state of consciousness to guide you and help you modify unpleasant or negative perceptions, such as pain or distress.

What is a dissociated state of consciousness?

We can all experience this state in everyday life. For example, when we are absorbed in a book or a film, our attention focuses on the story. Although we remain aware of our surroundings (e.g. the living room or the cinema), they fade into the background. In this state, suggestions are more effective. To continue with the cinema comparison: when we watch a film, we know the characters are actors and the situations are fictional, yet we feel real emotions such as joy or fear.

This state of consciousness is not the same as dreaming, but is more like daydreaming – a “waking dream” during which you remain in contact with your therapist. To fully benefit from hypnosis, you need to be ready to follow your therapist’s suggestions and, therefore, to place your trust in them.

What are the indications for clinical hypnosis?

The aim of clinical hypnosis is to improve your well being. It can be used for specific procedures or examinations to help you cope better with interventions such as a lumbar puncture, MRI or surgery.

In addition, hypnosis can help over the longer term in many care situations or illnesses that cause pain, distress or anxiety, or when treatment leads to side effects. It provides tools to draw on your inner resources and help you better manage negative sensations and emotions.

The course

of a hypnosis session

What happens during the first consultation?

A certified hypnotherapist will establish a relationship of trust with you, which is essential for clinical hypnosis and healthcare in general. They will answer your questions, and together you will define therapeutic goals – such as relieving chronic pain or anxiety.

If appropriate, a hypnosis session may be offered during this first consultation.

How does a session proceed?

A hypnosis session generally includes three phases:

1. Induction
2. Working on the therapeutic goals
3. Return to the usual waking state

What is the induction phase?

Your hypnotherapist will use appropriate words and phrases to guide you into the modified state of consciousness needed to work on your therapeutic goals.

What happens during the working phase?

In this phase, your therapist stimulates your imagination and invites you to “act as if” you were somewhere else, engaged in an activity or in a place of your choice that feels comfortable, pleasant and safe. Your hypnotherapist may also guide you to modify unpleasant perceptions associated with treatment.

Ultimately, hypnosis can help you change your perception of a situation and mobilise skills that strengthen your coping resources.

What is the return to the usual waking state?

This final phase brings you back to the “here and now”, while preserving the sensations and benefits experienced during the working phase.

How long does a hypnosis session last?

A session lasts between 20 and 60 minutes.

How many sessions are needed?

A single session may be sufficient for a one-off intervention (e.g. an examination or treatment). For longer-term needs (such as chronic pain or anxiety), several sessions may be required.

Who can practise hypnosis?

At HUG, hypnosis is performed by certified healthcare professionals with specialised training in the most common hospital uses of hypnosis.

When can hypnotherapy be used?

You can request this treatment during a hospital stay or an outpatient consultation.

During hospitalisation

Ask the healthcare staff in your unit to refer you to the certified clinical hypnosis professionals.

During an outpatient consultation

Ask the staff to forward your request either to a professional in the department or to the outpatient clinical hypnosis consultation (adult or pediatric) at HUG.

Your frequently asked questions

Who can benefit from clinical hypnosis at HUG?

Anyone from the age of four who is receiving care at HUG. No special skills are required – only your motivation.

Could my hypnotherapist manipulate me?

No. It is impossible to force someone under hypnosis to do something against their will. A part of you remains in control throughout the session. Among the suggestions offered, you are free to choose those you find beneficial. Contrary to popular belief, you do not sleep during hypnosis and can come out of it at any time.

Does clinical hypnosis replace other treatments?

No. It never replaces medical or surgical treatments and does not heal diseased organs. It works in conjunction with medical care.

Is this technique scientifically supported?

Yes. Neuroimaging studies have shown that during hypnosis sessions aimed at reducing painful sensations, the activity in areas of the brain related to pain is altered. Other studies have confirmed improvements in well being when hypnosis is used in the context of illness or medical treatment.

Must you be a doctor to practise hypnosis?

No. At HUG, clinical hypnosis is practised by a range of healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, midwives, etc.) who hold a certificate issued by HUG authorising them to perform clinical hypnosis.

Is it covered by health insurance?

Yes. During hospitalisation, clinical hypnosis is included in your hospital package. Outpatient sessions are reimbursed under the basic health insurance plan (LAMal), subject to your deductible and personal contribution (10% of the cost).

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You can identify a certified practitioner in clinical hypnosis by the sticker shown below, attached to their personal HUG identification badge.

**PRATICIEN
HYPNOSE**

Practical information

Requests for consultations can be sent to the Secretariat of the HUG Hypnosis Programme between 1.30 p.m. and 4.30 p.m.:

► By email

hypnose.consultation@hug.ch (adults)

hypnose.consultation-ped@hug.ch (children up to 16 years old)

More information

➤ www.hug.ch/programme-hypnose-hug