



Self-image

A guide for people with acromegaly

You deserve to feel good about yourself



It's true, you do. But you might have something in your head saying you don't feel it, not all the time. There may be parts of you that you're not happy with—that's normal and OK.

Self-image—the way we think and feel about ourselves and our role in life—is important. It's common to have concerns about it. It's also important to recognize those concerns, because they can hold us back.

This booklet contains some thoughts about self-image with acromegaly and how to cope.

Contents

Understanding self-image	4
Discover the concept of self-image, who it can impact, and some of the reasons why.	
What do we mean by self-image?	4
Who does it affect?	4
Making your self-image work for you	5
Some suggestions of ways to go about lessening the negative impacts that your self-image might be having on your day-to-day life.	
Thinking positively	5
Self-care and feeling good	6
Managing other people's reactions	6
Being open and honest with loved ones	8
Getting specialist support	8
Five ways to help promote positivity	9
You'll also find some suggestions for exercises to help promote mindfulness—ways of focusing internally on what your thoughts and feelings might be in various potential scenarios. You might be used to thinking in this way or it could be completely new to you, and quite uncomfortable at first. Take a moment to do this if you can. Working to challenge and reframe your thoughts could relieve some of the extra burden they might be adding to your day-to-day life, and help you feel more confident.	

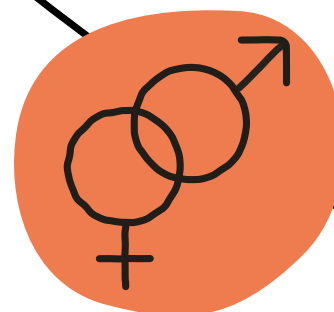
Understanding self-image

What do we mean by self-image?

There's a picture in our minds of how we:

- ▶ See ourselves and our body
- ▶ Think different aspects of our body look and work
- ▶ Think others see us

That picture, and how we feel about it, is our self-image. It's linked with how we feel about life in general, so it's important to keep track of it and seek help if we need it.



Who does it affect?

Regardless of how long you've had acromegaly, or how well your treatment has gone so far, anyone can be affected by self-image concerns.

Concerns might be because of physical signs and symptoms of acromegaly.

Or they could be because of unseen things, like changes in fertility, interest in sex, fatigue, or joint pain. Self-image concerns have a different impact on each of us. They may make some people feel uncomfortable or unhappy about themselves or their bodies, while others could feel anxious, and try to avoid situations or going out.

Making your self-image work for you

Thinking positively

Taking care of your thoughts—considering why you think the things you do about yourself—can be just as important as looking after your physical health and appearance. Find some suggestions on ways you can manage your thoughts more positively here and on [pages 9 and 10](#).

THOUGHT EXERCISE

Think of some things that you like about yourself. These might be physical attributes, or strengths that you possess, such as your character traits. Sometimes thinking about things our body and mind can do helps to change the way we feel about ourselves.

Self-care and feeling good

Taking care of your health and your appearance can help you feel more comfortable in your body and good about yourself, and more confident about heading into social situations. Find some ideas on self-care in the [Well-being Guide](#).

There are many things you can try, including using clothing, make-up, grooming, and accessories that can help draw attention to some areas of your body more than others.

Getting friends, family, or colleagues to read the [Supporting People With Acromegaly Guide](#) might help them understand a bit better what you're going through, and how they can help.

Managing other people's reactions

Occasionally, friends, family, colleagues, or strangers may make insensitive comments or suggestions about your appearance or your acromegaly (if they know about it).

Thinking about this in advance and having some strategies of how to respond can really help. Having ways to engage with people can help you face situations that worry you with more confidence.

Remember, other people's reactions to you, things you do, or your appearance are up to them—their reactions aren't your fault and you can't control them, although you might be able to influence them. They might be curious, or they might not properly or fully understand what acromegaly is, or how it can impact you.

Furthermore, although it may feel like it, they usually haven't intended to upset you, and might not realize their reaction has upset you.

One of the best things you can do is talk to them or someone else about how what's been said has made you feel. They can help you to see a different, and hopefully more positive, perspective.

THOUGHT EXERCISE

Imagine 2 scenarios when you find someone making an insensitive comment: one where you try one of the approaches suggested here, and one where you don't do anything at all. How do you feel after each scenario? Does one lead to an increase in confidence or sense of control?

Finally, you could think about how the way you present yourself can show other people how you feel about yourself.

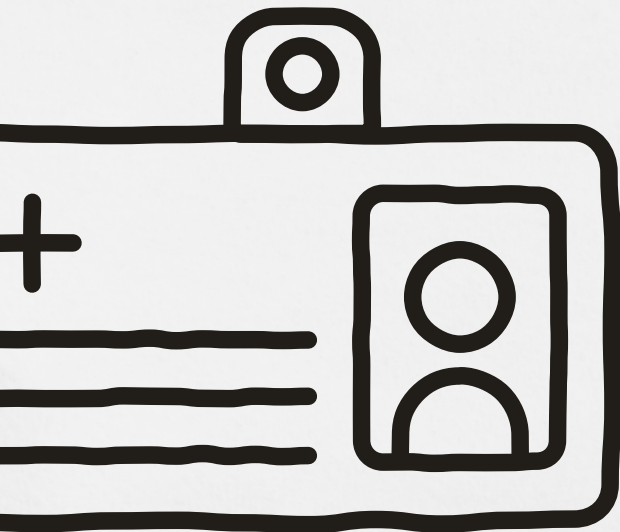
Remember, if you're feeling anxious or sad, it can be hard to appear OK and engage or respond to others with confidence. Practicing—either at home with yourself or with people you trust, or out and about in places you feel most comfortable—can really help you build up confidence.



Being open and honest with loved ones

Concerns about self-image can impact your relationships and your sexual confidence. If you're in a relationship, you might worry how attractive your partner finds you, or if they compare you to how you were before your diagnosis or symptoms. Remember, how attractive your partner finds you is linked to different things—things that go beyond how parts of your body look or function. Being open with them and discussing how you really feel can give you and your relationship a positive boost.

If you're not in a relationship, you might worry how a new partner will react to your acromegaly and its impact on you. It can be a continual source of worry to know when and how is the right way to tell a new partner about your condition. You could try talking about this and brainstorming different possible approaches with a trusted friend or family member, or seeking advice from an acromegaly community social group (online or in person, if this is available to you).



Getting specialist support

You might feel like you see enough specialist healthcare professionals already, but it's important to get extra help if your self-image concerns are starting to impact your day-to-day life or overcome your thoughts. Even just speaking with your primary care doctor about it can help, and they could refer you to other specialists, such as occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech or language therapists, and counselors or psychotherapists who are all trained to help.

Five ways to help promote positivity



1. Give yourself time

Managing your self-image can take time, but the first step toward improving your thoughts and feelings about your self-image is accepting that it exists, and that it's completely normal and OK to feel this way.

2. Find ways to be grateful

Think about what your body has done for you. You can feel proud about making it to a diagnosis, getting through surgery, or other treatments. You may even find that you appreciate the things your body can do for you more than before you were diagnosed.

3. Do things for you

Make time regularly to treat yourself—it could be something simple like finding a quiet spot to read or just be, or taking a relaxing bath.





4. Let friends help

Try to surround yourself with people who are positive, who you feel really accept you for who you are, and who encourage your strengths. You could try letting them know whenever you need an emotional boost. You could also share your thoughts in an acromegaly community social group. Find some suggestions of ones to join in the "Connecting with others" section of the **Well-being Guide**.

5. Look after your well-being

From going to that healthcare appointment, to reading this right now, think of all the things you're doing to look after yourself already, and congratulate yourself for them. There may be things you could improve, like eating a little better, getting enough sleep, or moving a little more. Don't be hard on yourself for not doing them yet. You can do them now. Head over to the **Well-being Guide** for suggestions of things you could try.

Notes



Helping you live well with acromegaly

Created in collaboration with an international panel of people with acromegaly, acromegaly support groups, and health psychologists, Acroline™ is a series of supportive guides and tools designed to help you keep your life on track and live well with acromegaly.

Related titles include:

- ▶ Well-being
- ▶ Acromegaly and health
- ▶ Supporting people with acromegaly

To view related brochures for more information, please [click here](#) or visit acromegaly.pfizerpro.com.