

Grant 12 HDANI Weighted Blanket Trial February 2021

ADDOR is pleased to announce a grant in support of the continued fight against Huntington's disease (HD), by providing financial assistance to Huntington's disease Association Northern Ireland (HDANI) to purchase weighted blankets for 10 HD sufferers.

Summary

Weighted blankets are heavy blankets that contain weighted balls or pellets and can weigh between 5 and 30 pounds. According to the manufacturers of weighted blankets, the pressure that the blanket places on a person's body has a therapeutic, calming effect.



There is currently very little scientific research exploring the effectiveness of weighted blankets. However, the available research suggests that weighted blankets may be beneficial for children with ASD and people with ADHD or anxiety. Research also shows that weighted blanket therapy creates a type of physical connection that has an abundance of positive effects on hormones governing the nervous system, affecting both mood and stress level.

Weighted blankets may not be suitable for people with certain pre-existing health conditions. Anyone who has a health condition that affects their breathing or circulation should consult a healthcare provider before using a weighted blanket.

Weighted blankets have been used to reduce or manage the symptoms of:

- ◆ Sleep disorders
- ◆ Nervous disorders
- ◆ Mood disorders like depression and anxiety
- ◆ Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and panic disorder
- ◆ Restless Leg Syndrome
- ◆ Arthritis, fibromyalgia, and pain
- ◆ General stress

It is also understood that weighted blankets have shown to have been beneficial to HD sufferers, as they suffer from involuntary movements of their limbs

Conclusion

Overall, the deep pressure stimulation from a weighted blanket provides a calming, soothing effect that is conducive to sleep. This allows the tense, anxious, restless person to get the sleep they need. And if they have pain, this special blanket can help relieve discomfort so they can get plenty of rest. People suffering from arthritis, fibromyalgia, and other painful conditions have found relief in sleeping with a weighted blanket. Growing numbers of people are finding that this special type of blanket is a good alternative to life-long sedative-hypnotic medications (sleeping pills) at night. By promoting the 'calming' hormones and neurotransmitters, a weighted blanket helps to calm both the body and the brain.

HDANI Trial

HDANI plan to undertake a trial with 10 users, for a period of 3 months, to determine the benefits of weighted blankets for HD sufferers. Feedback forms will be completed by the users after 3 months and the resulting information advised to ADDOR. Should this feedback be positive, ADDOR will look to help HD sufferers in other parts of the UK. However the extent of that help will need to take into account ADDOR'S finances, as there are some 7,000 HD sufferers in the UK.

ADDOR is very pleased to provide £400 to HDANI to purchase 10 weighted blankets. Should they prove beneficial to HD sufferers, then ADDOR will look to help, where possible, other HD sufferers in the UK.

If you would like to help in the fight to defeat HD, fund research and help HD sufferers

Please donate at addor.co.uk



HDANI Information on Weighted Blankets

HDANI was provided a grant by the ADDOR Foundation to gift weighted blankets to 10 of our service users. Information on the potential benefits and instructions for use are provided below. After three months we will be in contact to request feedback to see if you found the blanket of any benefit to you or a loved one so that the information might be used to help other people with Huntington's Disease.

What is a weighted blanket?

A weighted or gravity blanket is a specially designed blanket which contains glass beads or sand to create pressure on the body.

What is the science involved?

Weighted blankets are part of a range of approaches to the potential management of anxiety in both adults and children / it stems from observations in people who are thought to be hypersensitive to 'sensory' experiences (such as individuals with autism and other neurodiverse conditions). 'Sensory' experiences are those related to internal feelings (such as pain/bowel movements/swallowing/anxiety/taste) but also external ones (heat/touch/noise/light). These are problematic for people whose perception of sensations are changed in some way.

The pressure from the extra weight in the blankets mimics a therapeutic technique called deep pressure stimulation which is shown to relieve pain, lessen anxiety and improve mood.

Researchers have studied weighted blankets' effectiveness for various conditions. Although more research is needed, results have so far indicated benefits to people with sensory issues, anxiety, sleep issues and dementia.

Who should use the blanket?

We specifically want people with Huntington's to use the blanket as we believe it could be helpful to them but other people in your house are welcome to try it out too.

When should it be used?

As with many things in HD world, a weighted blanket needs to be introduced in line with the individual's preferences for example using a structured timetable or a routine which recognises when the anxiety is worse.

How long should it be used?

You should start off slowly to see how a person responds and leave it on for a short period and if they seem content you can build the time up day by day. For example, you might start with 10 minutes in the afternoon while they are watching TV or listening to music in their favourite chair. Try to keep an eye on how they respond to it and you can adjust the time of the day and length of time used accordingly.

What should it not be used for?

It should not be used to restrain a person's movement or without their consent which means you should tell them you are using it and why e.g. to help them relax. It shouldn't be left on a person with reduced mobility for long periods unsupervised in case they get agitated or are unable to remove it themselves or it poses a risk of trips or falls.

How should I care for the blanket?

You may want to put a duvet cover over it to help keep it clean. If it needs to be washed it should be washed in line with the instructions- hand wash only, do not wash in the machine, bleach, iron or tumble dry as this could damage the blanket and make it unusable.

What if it don't like the blanket?

If you or someone on your household with HD doesn't want to use the blanket then please get in touch so we can arrange to collect, clean and pass it on to another person with HD so that they might use it.

HDANI Weighted Blankets Feedback

HDANI was provided a grant by the ADDOR Foundation to gift weighted blankets to 10 of our service users. We would appreciate your feedback to see if you found the blanket of any benefit to you or a loved one so that the information might be used to help other people with Huntington's Disease.

Your name: _____

If you used the blanket yourself, please answer the questions below:

How often did you use it? Every day, some days, once a week, now & again

Did you like using it?

Please circle any words you would associate with using the blanket

Relaxing calming uncomfortable warm restrictive annoying

Slower heart less fidgety deep breathing better sleep
agitated

Refreshed better mood anxious comfortable

If someone else used the blanket, please answer the questions below:

How often did they use it? -

Did they like using it?

Please circle any words you would associate with the person using the blanket

Relaxing calming uncomfortable warm restrictive annoying

Slower heart less fidgety deep breathing better sleep
agitated

Refreshed better mood anxious comfortable

Would you recommend a weighted blanket to other people?

Any other comments?
