

Special instructions

TENS machines are not suitable for patients with a cardiac pacemaker. If you have any concerns, please speak to a member of the pain service for advice before using the machine.

TENS machines should not be used when driving or operating machinery.

TENS machines must not be allowed to get wet.

The TENS electrodes must not be placed over broken areas of skin.

Contact information if you are worried about your condition

Your own GP

Other useful contacts

NHS 111
Stop Smoking Helpline (Sefton) - 0300 100 1000
Stop Smoking Helpline (West Lancashire) - 0800 328 6297

Southport & Formby Hospital
Town Lane,
Kew,
Southport,
Merseyside,
PR8 6PN
Telephone:
01704 547471

Ormskirk Hospital
Dicconson Way,
Wigan Road,
Ormskirk,
Lancashire,
L39 2AZ
Telephone:
01695 577 111

Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation

TENS

Patient information

If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید، لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formacie, proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotowuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil, vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتنسيق يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation-TENS

Notes

TENS is a complimentary pain management tool which aims to help lessen your experience of pain. Time in the pain management clinic is available to you, to discuss possible options available with the health professional providing this treatment.

Full operating instructions and pad positioning guidance will be given to you by the health professional in clinic, to ensure your treatment is tailored to your specific pain problem. TENS is a non-invasive treatment which is generally well tolerated and largely side effect free. TENS should always be used according to the manufacturer's guidelines.

What is a TENS machine?

A TENS machine is a portable battery operated device which has wires extending from it, which attach to special sticky pads that stick onto the skin. The TENS machine transmits small variable electrical pulses via the sticky pads. TENS machines are thought to affect the way pain signals are sent to the brain. Pain signals reach the brain through nerve fibres and the spinal cord. TENS works on the theory that if these pain signals can be reduced or blocked when the machine is switched on, then the brain will interpret fewer signals from the site of your pain.

How does a TENS machine work?

On a low pulse rate the electrical pulse causes excitement of the underlying nerve fibres, which encourage the body's production of endorphins-the body's own natural painkiller. On a high pulse rate, the electrical pulses can block pain signals from reaching the brain. This is because the brain will interpret the faster signals from the TENS, rather than the slow pain signals from the site of the pain, resulting in your pain being reduced.

Where do I position the sticky pads?

You will be shown where to place the sticky pads to ensure the positioning of the pads is in the best place to help your pain symptoms. The sticky pads may not stick well if the skin area being treated is particularly oily or hairy, or the sticky pads have dried out or lost their adhesive due to frequent re-applications.

Can I leave the sticky pads on all day?

Once you have positioned the sticky pads they can be left on the skin all day. It is important to ensure that the sticky pads when not positioned on your skin, are placed back on the plastic backing which is supplied with the sticky pads.

How long can I use the TENS machine for each day?

The TENS machine can be switched on for set periods of time frequently throughout the day. You will be advised by the health professional in clinic how often to use your machine.

What will the TENS machine feel like?

The intensity can be adjusted to ensure you experience a strong, but comfortable tingling sensation under at least one of each pair of TENS sticky pads. The health professional in clinic will show you how to do this. It can take a little while, perhaps even up to an hour before you experience pain relief once the machine has been switched on. On occasion TENS can cause patients to experience headaches. This can be avoided by changing the settings, or if necessary reducing the pulse width. If you have any questions about this please discuss it with your health professional.

TENS machine loan service

If you have been loaned a TENS machine to try via the pain clinic, this will be for a set period of time as agreed with the clinic.

It is your responsibility to ensure the machine is returned to the department at the end of this period, so that other patients may also benefit from its use.

References

Johnson, M. et al (2022). Efficacy and safety of transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) for acute and chronic pain in adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis of 381 studies (the meta-TENS study). *British Medical Journal*. 12(2), pp 1-12.

This patient information leaflet is intended to support discussion during your clinical consultation. If there is anything you do not understand or are unsure about, please ask the health professional at your appointment or contact the people below.

Southport
Chronic pain management
(Monday to Wednesday, 8am to 4pm)
Tel: 01704 704201

Ormskirk
Chronic pain management
(Wednesday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)
Tel: 01695 656421

If the secretary is away from the phone when you call please leave a message on the answer machine, giving a contact number and someone will get back in touch with you.

During your contact with us, it is important that you are happy with your care and treatment. Please speak to a member of staff and/or ward/department sister/charge nurse if you have any questions or concerns.