

Patient Information

TENS

Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation

TENS is the abbreviation for transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation - a non-invasive method of reducing or eliminating pain without drugs.

TENS equipment consists of a battery powered stimulator, connecting wires and electrodes which adhere to the skin. By adjusting the control knobs on the stimulator, the patient is able to start or stop the electrical impulses and can vary the length and intensity of each impulse.

The TENS unit produces a mild tingling sensation travel from the stimulator through the connecting wires to the electrodes. Typically, a pair of electrodes are placed near the spine where the nerve pathway connects to the spinal cord, and sometimes a second set of electrodes is located at the site of the pain. As the current passes through the skin and stimulates the nerve pathway, the pain messages travelling along the nerve are effectively blocked or altered before reaching the brain. Therefore, the brain tends to receive a confused message and does not interpret this as pain. The reduction in pain may last several hours after turning of a TENS unit.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS TENS?

TENS has been used to control chronic and acute pain in a wide variety of cases. Patient attitude and clinical history can play an important part, and this is why patients must undergo a thorough examination by a member of our clinical team (doctor, nurse or physiotherapist) before TENS treatment can begin. The method is widely used by health care professionals treating everything from sports injuries to long term pain sufferers.

The unit can be worn for 23 out of every 24 hours but it should be removed for at least one hour a day to rest the area. Most patients tend to wear the TENS unit for 4 to 8 hours per day. It is however entirely a personal preference.

There is no right or wrong answer – the length of time you wear the TENS is entirely up to you. Some patients get relief even from only a couple of hours a day. Optimum results are obtained by applying the TESN before the pain level builds up too high. If you turn the unit on when the pain is relatively low, it is easier to manage the pain than waiting till the pain level becomes very high.

It can be worn at night. It can NOT be worn while bathing or swimming but is safe to wear while driving.

THIS DEVICE CANNOT BE USED IF YOU HAVE A PACEMAKER



<https://creativecommons.org>



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by consumers.



Government of South Australia

Health
Southern Adelaide
Local Health Network