

Chronic Pain Clinic

Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) for pain relief

What is a TENS machine?

This is a small, lightweight, battery operated device which is thought to work by blocking painful sensations through the electrical stimulation of specialised nerve fibres. The device works with two or more adhesive electrode pads that are placed on or around the site of your pain, or on the nerve routes that supply the painful area. The nurse who demonstrates the machine to you will make sure you understand about pad positioning.

How does it work?

It may be effective in the management of pain in three ways:

- Painful messages are carried through nerves to the brain. TENS is thought to work by blocking the painful impulses along the nerve pathways.
- The machine may stimulate the release of the body's natural pain relieving chemicals (endorphins).
- The machine can help to relax muscles, which may help to ease the pain.

Using the TENS Machine

- Always make the sure the machine is switched off before applying or removing the electrode pads.
- Make sure the selected skin area is clean, dry, and that the skin is not broken. The nurse will show you where the electrode pad can be placed.
- When the machine is switched on, the electrical stimulation may be felt as small tingling impulses, which will alter as the pulse rate/frequency and pulse width dials are moved.
- It should be set on the most comfortable and relaxing position. The nurse will explain this to you in great detail when the machine is first given to you.

How often should I wear it?

Use the TENS for a few hours continuously. You may increase this time and find that you are wearing TENS for much of the day.

Points to remember

- The TENS machine should not be worn in the bath or shower as this is an electrical device.
- The TENS machine should not be placed if you have broken, sore or infected skin as this may be made worse.
- Ensure that you check the skin underneath the pads during use as sometimes it can become red and sore. If this happens you will need to move the position of the pads.
- The TENS electrode pads should not be placed on the front of the neck as this may cause you to feel faint). The TENS electrode pads should not be placed near the eyes or in the mouth as this may cause you burns.
- Do not place pads around your heart as this may affect the rhythm of your heart.
- It is not advisable to sleep with the TENS machine on as you may inadvertently knock the controls.
- It is not advisable to use TENS when pregnant, unless under medical supervision.

Will I be able to move about?

Yes. It is important that you carry on with your normal daily routine

Should I still take my tablets?

Yes, but if after a few days the pain has been helped by the TENS, you may find you need the tablets less frequently.

The (TENS) machine is for your personal use only. This machine is on loan to you for the duration of the trial period (usually two to four weeks). If you find a benefit with TENS the Chronic Pain Service can advise you on how to purchase a machine for use at home. Additional information and advice from the manufacturers is also available with each machine.

Additional Information

If you need more information, or have any questions, please contact the Pain Clinic.

Telephone number: (01223) 217796
Pain Clinic
Box 215



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. You cannot smoke on site. For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free, 0800 169 0 169

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Informacje te można otrzymać w innych językach, w wersji dużym drukiem lub audio. Zamówienia prosimy składać pod numerem: 01223 216032 lub wysyłając e-mail: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Polish

Se precisar desta informação num outro idioma, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio por favor telefone para o 01223 216032 ou envie uma mensagem para: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Portuguese

Если вам требуется эта информация на другом языке, крупным шрифтом или в аудиоформате, пожалуйста, обращайтесь по телефону 01223 216032 или на вебсайт patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Russian

若你需要此信息的其他語言版本、大字體版或音頻格式，請致電 01223 216032 或發郵件到: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Cantonese

Bu bilgiyi diger dillerde veya büyük baskılı ya da sesli formatta isterseniz lütfen su numaradan kontak kurun: 01223 216032 veya asagidaki adrese e-posta gönderin: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Turkish

এই তথ্য বাংলায়, বড় অক্ষরে বা অডিও টেপে পেতে চাইলে দয়া করে 01223 216032 নম্বরে ফোন করুন বা patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করুন।

Bengali

Document history

Authors	The Chronic Pain Team
Department	Chronic Pain Service, Box 215, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ www.addenbrookes.org.uk
Contact number	01223 217796
Published	March 2009
Review date	March 2011
Supersedes which document?	Version 1, July 2006
Version number	2
Ref	PIN 1304