
Acute Pain Service

Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) for Pain Relief in Hospital

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 nerves 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:

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

Using the TENS machine

1. Always make sure the machine is switched off before applying or removing the electrode pads.
2. 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.
3. When the machine is switched on, the electrical stimulation may be felt as small tingling impulses, which will get faster when the frequency button is altered.
4. 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 at least five 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 someone checks 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 electrical conduction in your heart.
- It is not advisable to sleep with the TENS machine on as you may inadvertently knock the amplitude and frequency 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 your normal daily routine.

Should I still take my pain killing 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 for your personal use only. This machine is on loan to you for the duration of your stay in hospital. If you find a benefit with TENS the Acute 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.

If you would like further advice or information whilst in hospital please ask your nurse to contact the Acute Pain Service on bleep 152-365 or extension 3795.



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

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Portuguese

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Cantonese

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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

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