

TENS Information for Patients

Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation or T.E.N.S for short has a proven track record for relieving pain. As a result, this has significantly improved the quality of people's lives.

Where can it be used?

It can be used on various parts of the body but has to be applied to skin that has normal feeling i.e. not on numb areas or areas that feel like pins and needles.

How TENS works

TENS sends a harmless electrical current through pads coated with gel which are in contact with your skin. The pads are placed in areas which relate to your pain e.g. acupuncture points, not necessarily over the area of pain if the skin feeling is not normal. The electrical current, which feels like strong pins and needles, spreads to nerves in the skin and from there is transferred to the spinal cord to block pain messages. It also helps to release natural endorphins (a painkiller) which are found in the bloodstream.

How to gain most benefit from TENS

The TENS unit is designed to be portable and can therefore be used at any time during the day. It is normally recommended that you start to use the TENS for ½ an hour at a time up to 3 times a day. The length of time that it is worn for can also be increased but you should take advice from the physiotherapist first.

Cautions:

Do not use TENS if:

- You are pregnant
- If you have a pacemaker for your heart

DO NOT DRIVE ANY TYPE OF VEHICLE OR OPERATE MACHINERY WHEN TENS UNIT IS SWITCHED ON

DO NOT USE THE TENS FOR ANY OTHER AREA OF PAIN UNLESS YOU HAVE CONSULTED THE PHYSIOTHERAPIST

General guidelines and skincare

- Make sure the leads for the TENS unit are tucked inside your clothes so they do not catch on things like the handles of pots.
- Remember to have the unit switched off before applying and when removing the electrodes
- Do not apply the electrodes anywhere other than the areas you have been shown.
- The area that you place the electrodes should be clean and dry. Make sure you do not have any lotions, creams or talcum powder on your skin.
- If the skin becomes red and itchy, or if a rash occurs, stop using the unit and contact the physiotherapist.

Care of the pads

The gel pads are disposable but should last for several weeks before needing to be replaced. This of course will depend on the amount of use. If the gel is peeling off do not use. Replacement electrodes are easy to buy.

The electrodes are best looked after by sticking them back onto the plastic film that is supplied with them. Follow manufacturer's guidelines.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A TRIAL OF TENS CONTACT THE PHYSIOTHERAPIST TO ARRANGE THIS.