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Using a TENS machine for pain relief (adults and children)

Pain Service

Information for Patients

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Introduction

- Your consultant has recommended that you use a Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulator (TENS) machine.
- This machine is on loan to you. You must return it to the pain department after your trial.
- We can let you know how to buy your own machine if you choose to do that.

How does it work?

- It ‘rubs’ the pain better electrically.
- It stimulates the body’s natural pain-relieving substances.
- Pain relief can take from 20 minutes to a few hours.

How should I use the TENS machine?

We will show you where to put your TENS pads. It is important that you:

- Do not place pads over the carotid artery in your neck (we will show you where this is).
- Do not let other people borrow your machine.
- Do not use the TENS in water (for example, no bathing/showering/swimming).
- Do not use it for longer than we have told you.

When not to use TENS machine

- Do not use it if you have a pacemaker fitted.
- Do not use it if you have a spial cord stimulator in place.
- Do not use it if you have a shunt in place (unless talked about with your neurosurgeon).
- Do not use it if you have epilepsy.
- Do not use it if you have a blood clot or blood clotting disorder.
- Do not use during pregnancy (unless advised otherwise by your doctor or midwife.

Instructions for gel pads

- We will give you some gel pads. These will last up to 4 weeks. This is if they are used for 2 to 12 hours a day.
- Put the gel pads back in their protective covers. Store overnight in the fridge.
- If the pads feel or look dull, splash with a little water. Put back in their covers overnight.

Using the 120 dual channel TENS

- Wear for at least 2 hours. Do not wear for longer than 12 hours a day.
- Change the position of the gel pads each day. This is to avoid overstimulation in one area.

Always set up the machine in this order:

1. **Pulse Width:** 60 to 80
2. **Pulse Rate (PR):** Start at 10
3. **Mode C, B or M**
4. **CH1/CH2:** These are the buttons which turn the machine on and off. They are on the top of the machine

- **Pulse Rate (PR):** This is the speed of sensation through the electrodes. Do not keep changing the rate. Keep the same rate for at least 2 hours to see if it is easing your pain before switching it up.
- **CH1/CH2:** Turn on and increase until you get a tingly feeling. This should be strong enough to feel but not uncomfortable. You should leave it on the same setting for 2 hours before increasing it. This is if it does not cause pain.
- **C/N (continuous/normal):** For constant use for up to 12 hours.
- **B (burst):** Use no more than 4 times a day for 30 minutes (½ hour) each time. If you use this too much your muscles can become over tired and give you more pain. You can change it to burst for 30 minutes before you do anything that makes your pain worse.
- **M (modulation):** For up to 12 hours of use. This gives an ‘on/off’ feeling. You can use this setting if the machine is no longer helping your pain on the constant setting.

If you reach level ‘8’ on the TENS dial but can longer feel the pulse sensation, try turning off the TENS machine and turning the pulse rate to the next level. The TENS should then be restarted at level ‘1’ and slowly increased to a safe level.

Remember:

- TENS does not have any side effects for most people, however if you do have any side effects then stop using the TENS right away.
- If your pain becomes worse, stop using the machine right away.
- If you get a rash, try changing the position of electrodes.
- Wear TENS up to 12 hours a day.
- Experiment to find the best stimulation for your pain.

We recommend:

- You **do not** sleep while using the machine.
- You **do not** change your lifestyle to fit in with the machine, make TENS fit into your life.
- If you need to change the battery, please use an AA or 9V battery depending on the machine.
- If any problems or concerns arise, stop TENS machine straight away.

Contact details

Adult service

If you need advice at home, please call the Pain Management Team on 0116 258 4202.

Children’s service

If you need advice at home, please call the Children's Pain Team on 0116 258 5015.

If you have a problem and cannot get advice, please stop using TENS until you have spoken to us.

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice
Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester’s Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

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If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net

We are a research hospital and you may be asked to take part in research

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