

TENs

Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation



Your TENs machine and how to use it

What is TENS - TENS is a method of stimulating the sensory nerves with the aim of providing a degree of symptomatic pain relief using the body's built in mechanisms via the pain gate and/or the opiod system. It is not a cure or substitute for medication but it may help reduce your pain, helping you to remain, or become more, active, to relax or in some cases even to reduce your pain medication.

TENS is non-invasive (the electrodes stick to the skin) and has few side effects. Research has shown it can work well with some people for both acute or chronic pain. The machine is small and easily portable, attached to a belt or in a pocket, meaning it can be used during most activities (not driving, bathing or sleeping).

TENS can be used whenever you have pain, but we suggest that you start with 3 sessions of 30 minutes a day, you can increase the time, checking that there is no skin irritation from the electrodes, as you need.

Feedback from users would suggest that you may need to change settings or electrode placement to find out what works for you. Your therapist will advise you on the best way to start. Keeping a TENS diary may help to record different settings, activities and how much TENS helped.

Precautions

Do not use when driving, sleeping, bathing or showering, if you have a pacemaker or electrical implant, on broken or infected skin, over the heart, near the eyes, mouth, or the front or side of the neck.

Do not share your machine or electrodes.

Check the leads are not worn or twisted, the battery is inserted correctly and the electrodes are attached securely.

STOP - if you experience any adverse effects or skin irritation and consult your therapist.

Instructions for use

- Make sure the machine is switched off before you start
- Place the electrodes on clean, dry skin either side of the painful area (or as directed by your therapist) keeping the pads at least 2.5cm apart and on an area of skin with normal sensation.
- Switch the machine on and slowly increase the intensity until a strong but comfortable tingling sensation can be felt.
- You may need to turn the intensity up during the session so you can feel the tingling sensation at all times. If you reach the top of the dial, switch off the machine and allow your nervous system to reset itself before starting again.
- Start with 30 mins and gradually increase the time of treatment sessions.
- After use, return to electrodes to the plastic sheet and bag to prolong their life - if they dry out moisten them with a few drops of water and place in a bag in the fridge. Replacement pads are available online or check with your local Chemist.

We hope you will find your TENs unit helpful, however if you have any concerns or questions about your TENs machine and using it, please contact your Therapist.

Further information can be found in the manufacturer's booklet included with your machine, or visit www.electrotherapy.org.uk