

Patient and carer information

TENS

(Transcutaneous
electrical nerve
stimulation)



Marie Curie Hospice



Marie Curie
Cancer Care



What is TENS?

TENS is a way to relieve pain that does not involve taking medication.

How does TENS work?

TENS uses a small battery-operated machine to produce electrical pulses that pass along wires to two sticky pads (electrodes) on the skin's surface. A low intensity charge passes across the skin from one electrode to the other. This stimulates nerves and sends signals to the brain to block pain messages. TENS can also stimulate the body's own pain-relieving hormones (endorphins). TENS does not cure the cause of the pain, but its effect is that you may not be able to feel it.

TENS works best on pain in muscles, joints and nerves rather than pain in the abdomen, chest and head.

Is TENS safe?

TENS machines are safe when used correctly, but it is best to take advice from a health professional such as a doctor, nurse or physiotherapist.

The following people should not use TENS:

- people with certain types of heart disease
- people with pacemakers
- people with epilepsy
- pregnant women (unless advised)

How do I use a TENS machine?

A health professional can show you how to use TENS and where to place the electrodes.

Before using TENS you should be aware of the following:

- Do not place electrodes on broken or damaged skin.
- Do not place electrodes in the same place each day as the skin will become dry and sore.
- Do not place electrodes over the front or side of the neck, or close to the eyes.
- Do not use on areas of the body where there is reduced sensation (feeling).
- Do not get the electrodes or the machine wet.
- Do not use TENS in the bath or shower.
- Do not use when driving or operating machinery.
- Switch off the machine before placing or removing the electrodes.
- Never stick the electrodes together.

TENS machines are portable and you can clip them onto your waistband or tuck them into a pocket so you can still move around.

How often can I use TENS?

Pain relief varies from one person to another. Some people may experience pain relief during the first treatment, while for others it may take several days. There is no limit to the number of times or the length of time a person uses a TENS machine, but it is strongly recommended that you seek advice and build up use gradually.

For links to websites about cancer care, information and support, visit our website:
www.mariecurie.org.uk/patientsandcarers

Support us

The services Marie Curie Cancer Care provides are always free to patients and families but we can only continue to do this through the generosity of our supporters. There are many ways to make a difference:

- make a donation
- leave a legacy in your will
- take part in a fundraising event
- volunteer your time for a wide range of activities
- sponsor a Light to Remember
- become a corporate partner

To find out more, phone: **0800 716 146**, visit our website: www.mariecurie.org.uk or **talk to the hospice fundraiser.**

Your local Marie Curie Hospice actively promotes quality of life for people with cancer and other illnesses and provides support for their families, completely free.

www.mariecurie.org.uk



Marie Curie
Cancer Care

