

Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS)

A patient's guide

Your starting settings are:

Name:

TENS serial number:

Programme / settings:

Contact name and number:

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TENS (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation) is a small, portable, battery-operated device used for the treatment of pain.

It has self-adhesive, removable electrodes that are applied around or on a painful area. These electrodes send a comfortable tingling/massaging sensation along the skin that can change the pain sensations.

The TENS machine is thought to work in a variety of ways to help relieve pain by:

- Stopping pain impulses along the nerve pathways before they reach the brain;
- Stimulating the production of chemicals called endorphins which are the body's natural pain-relieving chemicals;
- Helping to relax the muscles in the body which may in turn help to ease the pain;
- Distracting you from the painful experience.

The staff at Royal Papworth are happy to loan you a TENS

machine in order for you to try its effect. If at any time you decide that you would like to buy your own machine, we would be happy to advise you where to purchase one.

When NOT to use TENS

- If you have a pacemaker, implantable cardioverter defibrillator or ventricular assist device;
- During pregnancy, unless under medical supervision;
- Do not use electrodes on fragile or broken skin;
- Do not use TENS if you have uncontrolled epilepsy ;
- Whilst driving;
- On numb/insensitive skin;
- In the bath or shower;
- Do NOT sleep with TENS machine switched on;
- Do NOT place electrodes over the front of the neck, near eyes or in the mouth.

There are some exceptions to this, but you will be advised as to where and when your TENS machine should be used.

Using TENS

You will be shown how to use the TENS machine and where to put the electrodes.

In most cases TENS provides a simple, highly effective method of analgesia. However, the position of the electrodes and the settings of the TENS unit may need to be altered several times before it is right for you.

TENS can be used to help relieve pain but may not eliminate it completely. As you get used to using the TENS machine, you should become more confident in moving the electrodes around to suit you and your own pain. In the same way, you may change the settings to best suit your needs, but initially it will be set for you.

If your pain worsens whilst using the TENS machine, let us know.

You will be advised initially to try the machine for approximately 30 minutes and then stop in order to check that there is no skin irritation/redness under the electrodes.

You can then build up the amount of time you use the TENS machine to suit your individual pain needs.

There are different types of TENS machines available. We will show you how to use the model you are given.

Remember to remove the machine and electrodes before bedtime.

You will be able to move about whilst using this machine and continue most of your everyday activities. Remember YOU are the one in control.

If you need further advice on using the TENS machine, please contact us.

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