

TENS for pain control

Information for patients



Welcome

This leaflet will tell you why TENS may be helpful and how to use it safely. There are many types of TENS machines. You should always read the instructions relating to the type of machine you have.

What is a TENS machine?

TENS stands for Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation. It is a small, light, battery powered machine which you can carry with you. Some people find it a helpful way of reducing pain.

The TENS machine has pads that you stick on your body near the pain. When the machine is switched on, the pads make a tingling feeling, a bit like pins and needles.

How does TENS work?

TENS helps pain in the same way as rubbing your elbow after you have banged it. The tingling feeling stops or cuts down the pain messages from reaching the brain so you feel less pain. It can also tell the body to make more of its own painkilling hormones (endorphins).

TENS may help to lower the level of your pain while the machine is turned on. You may need fewer pain killers, which your Doctor or Nurse will talk to you about.

Who should not use TENS machines?

- **Do not** use if you have a pacemaker
- **Do not** use if you are pregnant (speak to your midwife if you wish to use a TENS)
- **Do not** use if you have fits (epilepsy)
- **Do not** use if you have no feeling in the pain area (numbness)
- **Do not** use if you have an implanted defibrillator
- **Do not** use if you have an implanted metallic or electronic device
- **Do not** use if you have an over active bladder

When not to use TENS machine

- **Do not** use on a new pain that you haven't told your doctor about
- **Do not** put the pads on the front or sides of your neck
- **Do not** use on the head or face without advice
- **Do not** use on broken skin
- **Do not** drive with the TENS turned on
- **Do not** give the TENS to other people
- **Do not** wear the TENS in the bath, shower or get it wet
- **Do not** let children play with the TENS

Cautions

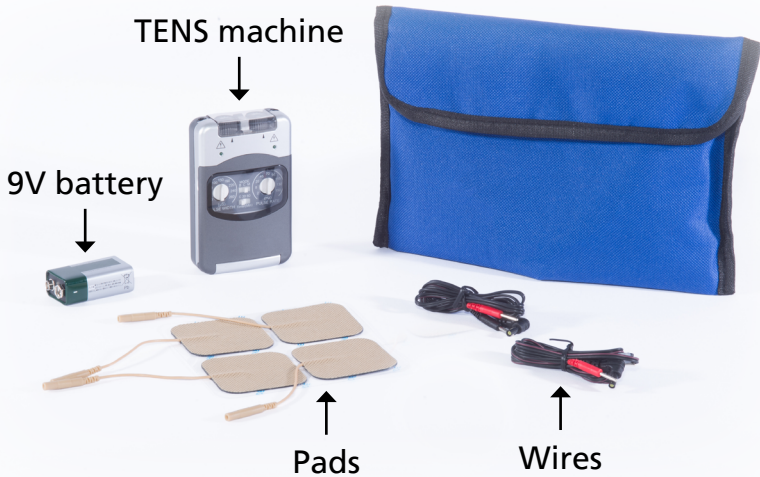
Skin reactions or electrode burns are possible.

Using the TENS machine

The professional who gives you the TENS machine will show you to use it.

In your TENS machine pack you will find:

- TENS machine
- 9V battery
- Wires
- Pads
- Manufacturers information leaflet



Step by step guide to using the TENS machine

1 - Set up the TENS

- Make sure the machine is turned off (both dials are in the off position (see picture 1))
- Open the dark grey cover and put in the battery (see picture 2)
- Plug the black end of one or both wires into the holes at the top of the TENS next to the dials. This allows you to use two or four pads (see picture 3)
- Then push the red and black ends of the wires into the end of the pads (see picture 6)

2 - Set the controls (see picture 4)

- With the dark grey cover still open
- Turn the pulse width dial to 150 μ s
- Turn the pulse rate dial to 70 Hz
- Set the mode to C (continuous)
- Set the timer to C (continuous)

Picture 1



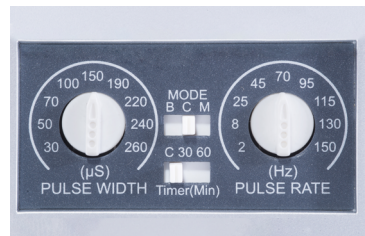
Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4

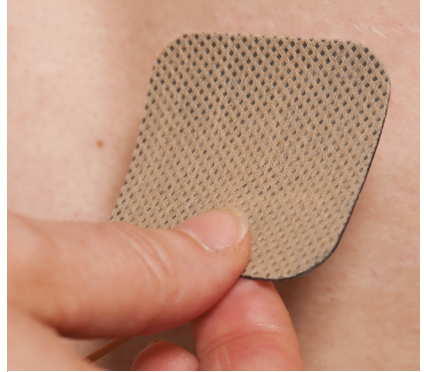


It is ok to change the settings as you use it more as you may find different settings more helpful.

3 - Put the pads on

- Make sure your skin is clean, dry and not hairy. **Do not** use cream or talc where you will put the pads
- Put the pads above and below or either side of the pain, about a hands width apart
- Try putting the pads in different places to see where it helps the pain the most and to prevent skin irritation
- **Do not** put the pads on the site of a cancer if you are having treatment (chemotherapy or radiotherapy)

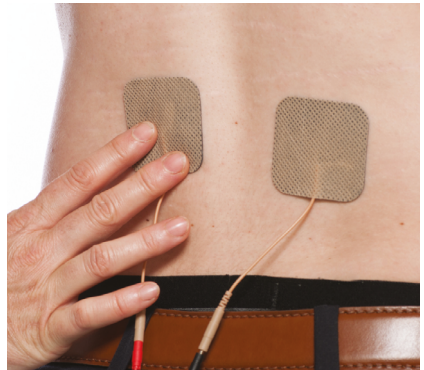
Picture 5



Picture 6



Picture 7



4 - Turn the TENS on (see picture 3)

- Slowly turn the numbered dial on the top of the TENS until you can feel a tingling. A green light will be on
- This should be a strong but comfortable tingling or pulsing feeling
- If you are using both leads (4 pads), turn one dial at a time
- The tingling feeling will fade after about 10 minutes. You can then turn the dial upwards to keep the feeling strong but comfortable
- If it feels unpleasant, turn the dial down to where it feels comfortable again

5 - How long shall I keep it on?

- Start by using the TENS for 30 to 45 minutes at a time
- The pads can be left in place all day, and the TENS turned on and off as needed
- When you are used to the TENS it can be used up to 12 hours a day
- It is best not to wear the TENS at night in bed in case you knock the controls

6 - What to do when you want to take off the TENS

- Turn the unit off by switching both dials to 'off'
- Peel the pads off but do not pull on the wire
- Put the pads back on the clear sheet in the packet
- Clean the skin with soap and water and dry it well

7 - What to do if the TENS has stopped helping

- Check the pads are in place
- Check the pads are sticking well to your skin
- The pads can lose their stickiness. If this happens try rubbing the pad with a small amount of cold water on the sticky side

Make sure the pads are not plugged in to the TENS when you do this

- You can buy new pads from most chemists or online
- Check or change the battery - the green light should be lit when the unit is on
- If all of these are working, try turning up the dial. (See point 4)

What shall I do if I have more questions?

- The TENS comes with the manufactures leaflet, which will be helpful for you to read
- Speak to the person who gave you the TENS machine or contact the Palliative Care Team on telephone number: **0113 20 64563**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/transcutaneous-electrical-nerve-stimulation-tens/>

Our TENS machines are bought from our charity fund. If you do not find it helpful please return it.

The Tens machine should only be used by yourself. If you have left hospital with the TENS machine and are not using it, please return it to the:

**Palliative Care Team,
1st Floor Robert Ogden Centre,
St James's University Hospital, Beckett Street,
Leeds, LS9 7TF**

Telephone number: 0113 20 64563

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.



What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/nhsleedsfft

Your views matter



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