

Spinal Cord Stimulator Trial

A spinal cord stimulator (SCS) trial is used to find out if this treatment will reduce your pain. The doctor will place trial wires next to your spine. The wires connect to a temporary battery secured to the outside of your body. The SCS representative will teach you how to use the remote. They will show you how to turn the stimulator on, off, up and down. A SCS trial period will last 5 to 7 days and no longer than 10 days.

To help us find out if the SCS is working for you, we want you to be as active as you can while following the guidelines in this handout.

Trial Record

It is **important** to keep a record of how things are going during the trial. For example:

- Does the SCS reduce your pain and by how much?
- Can you perform more of your daily activities?
- What activities?
- Was your sleep improved?
- Were you able to reduce your pain medicine?
- Fill out the Pain Log for the length of the trial.
- Your provider will let you know if you need to see a physical therapist before and after the trial.

If your pain is not reduced during the trial, you should tell the SCS representative. They might be able to make some changes to the device for better pain control.

Activity Guidelines

You will need to limit some activities during the trial period. This is so the wires in your back don't move. If they move too much, you can lose stimulation.

During the trial:

- **Do not** drive. Limit riding in the car to those trips that are necessary. Sudden stopping, accidents and getting in and out of the car can move the wires.
- **Do not** raise your arms above your head.
- **Do not** twist, bend, or stretch your body at the waist.
- When rolling over, keep your body straight.
- Be careful getting in and out of your chair and bed and any other time you change positions.
- **Do not** make any sudden movements.
- **Do not** lift items weighing more than 5 pounds or a gallon of milk.
- **Do not** strain during bowel movements. Take laxatives if needed.
- If you work, talk to your doctor about work limits.

You will have an incision in your back where the trial wires come out. This site may hurt for 2-3 days. To ease the pain, try an ice pack covered by a cloth and apply for up to 20 minutes, every hour as needed. You can use Tylenol if approved by your doctor. **Do not** take aspirin or NSAIDs such as naproxen, ibuprofen and diclofenac, which can increase bleeding.

Incision Care

The incision will be covered by a dressing. You will need to take very good care of the site to avoid infection.

- Keep the dressing dry. Do not shower, soak in the tub or go swimming. Sponge baths are best.
- Look at the dressing daily, check for any new drainage. A small amount of bright red blood on the dressing is normal the first 24 hours after surgery.
- If your dressing becomes loose, tape around the edge to secure it.
- Do not remove the dressing. Call the clinic if it needs to be replaced.

Signs of Infection

- Fever over 100.4° F by mouth for 2 readings, taken 4 hours apart
- Increased redness, swelling around the site
- Any drainage from the site

Follow-Up

Return to your doctor's office for your follow-up visit. Bring your pain log to discuss the results of your trial. Your trial SCS leads will be removed at this visit.

Your SCS leads will take time to heal in place. During this time your stimulator program may need to be adjusted. If you lose stimulation at any time call the clinic. You should have follow-up visits with your SCS provider.

When Call

The day of the procedure, for any problems or concerns call Madison Surgery Center.

For new symptoms or signs of infection call your doctor listed on the After-Visit Summary.

To discuss the next steps in your plan of care, contact the provider that **ordered** your procedure.

Who to Call

Madison Surgery Center (6 am-5 pm)
608-287-2200

UW Pain Clinic
608-263-9550

UW Spine Clinic
608-265-3207

After hours, please contact the ordering provider's clinic or the provider's clinic that performed the procedure. Tell the receptionist you had a procedure that day and need to see your doctor.

For **emergencies** go to the closest emergency room.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 1/2024 University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6805