

## Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS)

TENS stands for Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation. TENS units send electrical pulses through the skin to the nerves to control pain. Unlike drugs, TENS does not have any major side effects.

### How does TENS help pain?

- The TENS blocks pain signals and confuses your brain so that you are not aware of the pain.
- The body releases natural pain killers, called endorphins. These chemicals block the awareness of pain. This is how the TENS may provide pain relief, even after it is removed. You may wear a TENS unit as many hours as you need for pain control.

### How to Start a Session

1. Connect the lead wire(s) to the patches and the device. **NOTE:** Make sure the device is turned off.
2. Wash and dry the skin areas where you will be putting the patches.
3. Apply the patches to your skin surrounding the incision or painful area.
4. On the device, press the on/off button.
5. Start in the SMP mode.
6. Use the Ch1 and Ch 2 buttons to set the strength for each channel. Increase the strength until you feel a strong but not painful feeling. It should not cause your muscles to contract.

### Electrode Patches

- The electrode patches can be reused 10 to 15 times, depending on skin type and electrode care.
- Do not pull on the electrode wire. Doing so may damage the wire and electrode.
- Position the electrodes with a minimum of 2 inches apart between them. Do not let them touch each other.
- Do not reposition the electrodes while the device is turned on.
- The pad contact icon will display and flash if there is bad contact between the electrode and the skin.
- Electrodes should be removed from skin and placed on plastic backing between use to allow skin to dry and decrease risk of rash or other complications.
- The most common problems with TENS therapy are caused by failure to wear the electrodes as directed.

### How to Change a Session

- If SMP mode is not working well, there are other program options.
- You can change options by pressing the mode button or any of the five Quick Select Program buttons.
- For safety, the device will lock. Press the down button to unlock.

### **How to End a Session**

1. On the device, press the on/off button to shut the device off.
2. Disconnect the wire(s) from the patches.
3. Remove the patches from your skin. Place back on the plastic backings between uses. If they are too dry, apply a drop of water to the patch.
4. Use skin cream or lotion to your skin after taking off the patches.

### **Do Not Use**

- If you have a cardiac pacemaker or implanted defibrillator.
- If you are pregnant.
- On your head or over your throat.
- With a heart monitor or history of seizures unless your doctor said it was okay.
- If you are around water.

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 © 9/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7912