

## Spinal Cord Stimulator Trial

A spinal cord stimulator (SCS) trial is used to find out if this treatment will reduce your pain. The physician 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 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.

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 the trial starts and again before the trial ends.

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

### Limit Actions

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 with any other position changes.
- 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. Tylenol is okay to use if approved by your doctor. **Do not** take aspirin or NSAIDS such as naproxen, ibuprofen and diclofenac which can increase bleeding.

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.

#### **When to Call**

- Pus-like drainage.
- Fever over 100.4° F or 38.0° C, taken by mouth for two readings, 4 hours apart.
- Site is red or warm to touch.
- Excess swelling, bruising, or bleeding.
- Pain you cannot control.

**Call the clinic before the trial** if you feel sick, have any kind of infection or you are on antibiotics within 2 weeks before the trial.

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

#### **Who to Call**

UW Spine Clinic  
**(608) 265-3207**

Dr. Michael Suer

UW Pain Clinic  
**(608) 263-9550**

Dr. Nalini Sehgal

Dr. Michelle Poliak-Tunis

Dr. Roy Kim

Dr. Keth Pride

Dr. Alaa Abd-Elseyed

After hours, nights and weekends call **(608) 262-0486 or (800) 323-8942**. Ask for your doctor. The doctor on call will return your call.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

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 © 9/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6805