

Managing pain in children using TENS

Information for parents and carers



What is TENS (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulator)?

TENS is a safe, easy to use, drug free method of managing pain.

'Transcutaneous' means through the skin. A low level electrical current stimulates nerves in the body that help to reduce pain.

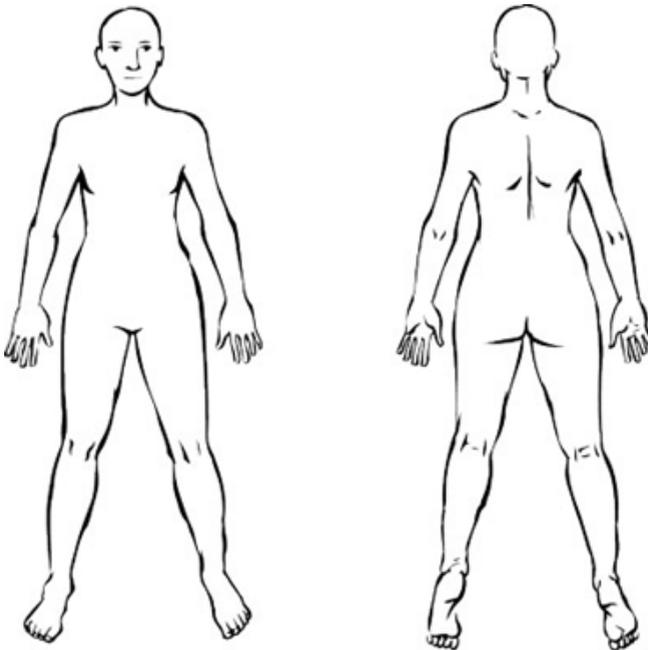
How does it work?

TENS is a small battery operated box which is attached to your child using two sticky electrode pads placed on the skin. The pads are placed around the painful area, or on areas where the nerve path passes into the spinal cord.

The machine sends gentle electrical pulses through the electrodes, which are then picked up by the nerve cells, blocking the pain signals travelling to the brain. This may help to relieve pain and relax muscles. It may also stimulate the production of endorphins, which are the body's natural pain killers.

How to use a TENS machine

1. Attach the sticky pads in the position indicated on the picture below.



2. Connect the pads to the wires:
 - red near to spine
 - black near pain site
3. Insert battery in box, ensure the left dial (pulse width) is set between 180 – 200, and the right dial (pulse rate) is set to 80.
4. Mode setting should be on N (normal) to start with.
5. Connect wires to box.
6. Now gently turn on by turning the dial to 1. You can increase this until your child feels a tingling or buzzing sensation, this should be fairly strong but not uncomfortable. You should now see an orange light on the box.

Use your TENS for 1 to 1½ hours, up to four times a day. It is important to have breaks between uses.

Try to use it every day for 4 weeks before deciding whether it helps or not.

During the day, when the box is switched off, the sticky pads can be left in place with the leads tucked inside your child's clothes.

When should the TENS not be used?

- Whilst sleeping.
- If your child has a pacemaker or any other electrical or metal implant in their body.
- If your child has epilepsy.
- If the source of pain is over the site of any previous surgery where internal metalwork, such as screws, wires, implants or metal plates have been inserted.
- If your child has poor sensation in the area where the electrodes are to be applied.

Are there any side effects?

Sometimes a mild reaction to adhesive electrode pads has been recorded. If skin irritation occurs please discuss with your child's health care professional for alternative options for reducing irritation.

Checklist

7. Make sure the connector is pushed firmly into the machine.
8. There should be a minimum of two inches between the sticky pads.
9. Remember to turn the machine off before removing the wires/sticky pads.
10. Check the skin is not irritated.
11. Check self-adhesive electrodes for damage and discard if the surface covering is broken or if the rubber is exposed.
12. Make sure the TENS is turned off completely and the light has gone out when not in use to avoid running down the battery.

Any questions?

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact us:

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If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

