

## Do not

- › apply electrodes to wet, damp skin or over a skin allergy, blister or bruising.
- › wear while bathing or showering.
- › remove leads while machine is switched on. This could produce a mild electric shock. Always make sure the TENS is switched off at the end of each application.
- › wear TENS whilst driving? (this could be a distraction and present safety issues)
- › apply to your spine, heart, the front of your neck, face or area around your heart unless specifically instructed. You should not apply to the abdomen during pregnancy.
- › attempt to repair any broken leads.
- › have intensity of TENS stimulation so high that it is physically uncomfortable. Instead of reducing your pain this could aggravate your pain
- › lend your machine to anybody else who could be masking a pain. Advise that person to seek medical advice/approval before using a TENS.
- › use TENS on new pain, make sure the source of the pain has been identified by a doctor and approval has been given to use the TENS machine for that pain.



If you have any problems please contact one of the clinical nurses at the Pain Medicine Centre at Royal Perth Hospital via switchboard.

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The **new**



# TENS Therapy

## Patient information

**TENS** = Transcutaneous  
Electrical Nerve Stimulation



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[rph.health.wa.gov.au](http://rph.health.wa.gov.au)

[healthywa.wa.gov.au](http://healthywa.wa.gov.au)

## What is a **TENS** machine?

A Tens machine is a small box that transmits small electrical pulses around or through the site of pain. The TENS machine is battery operated. It has small wires attached, at the end of which are self-stick pads known as electrodes which make contact with the skin. The TENS machine can vary in size, although typically it is about as big as a pack of cards. All working parts of the TENS will be explained in more detail at your TENS fitting appointment and you will be able to ask questions to make sure you fully understand.

## How does it work?

A TENS machine works by passing an electrical current across the surface of the skin stimulating nerve endings. Larger nerve endings stimulated by the TENS machine aim to block smaller nerve endings from carrying painful signals to the brain.

TENS also helps to increase the release of your own body's natural pain relieving chemicals (endorphins). Endorphins

help block pain signals. A higher level of endorphins in your system can help you feel more positive about yourself and move with greater ease.

TENS is non-invasive, inexpensive and is a self-administered technique to relieve pain. There are few side effects and no potential for overdose so you can use a TENS machine regularly to assist in your pain management.

TENS is naturalistic. It gives you more control and can potentially increase relaxation, improve sleep and reduce pain medication requirements.

## Do's and Do not's when using your **TENS**

### Do

- › apply each day to Clean dry skin as required
- › alternative site of TENS self stick electrodes and observe skin daily for signs of redness or irritation
- › replace TENS self-stick electrodes onto their backing. (Handy tip: Keep in fridge to prolong the stickiness of pads.)

- › insert TENS leads completely in to self stick electrode pads prior to application.
- › switch TENS on either prior to a painful event, during an activity that you know may increase your pain or immediately after an event that has increased your pain levels.
- › use for between 20-60mins according to your pain needs. Good Advice is not to leave a TENS machine constantly applied to your body only use when required.
- › Allow the same amount of rest period equal to the time you have had the TENS switched on in use.
- › have a rest period this will allow the body not to become too immune to the TENS reducing potential effectiveness this rest period will also allow you to assess how helpful the TENS therapy is.
- › apply the TENS according to your needs.
- › be aware that the battery will wear down and you may need to switch the machine to a higher number to ensure the same output of stimulation.
- › Keep your machine clean and safe and if you no longer require it please return it to the pain medicine centre.

