Urology department

Sacral nerve stimulation (test phase): Frequently asked questions

When you wake up and the level of stimulation
After you wake up, the test stimulator box will be attached. When the implant is switched on, you will feel a tapping sensation in the genital or rectal area. There are two dials on the top of the stimulator. One will be taped over as you do not need to change the settings on this. The other has numbers on it which you will be able to adjust. This level will be adjusted whilst you are awake.

You can either leave the stimulator at this level so that you can slightly feel it or set the stimulator just below this level so that you cannot feel it. This depends on what is more comfortable for you.

If you have it slightly below then turn the dial up slightly each morning to ensure that you can still feel it and the equipment is working.

Don’t forget the stimulator box is attached to you. If it pulls, it may dislodge the wire.

What to do if you can no longer feel the stimulation
If on turning the stimulator up each day you cannot feel anything at the level previously set, try turning it up slightly more as sometimes over time this will alter.

If despite doing this, you still cannot feel anything, turn the stimulator off and change the battery. Then go through the process again. If still nothing happens, contact the specialist nurse or consultant.

Precautions
When you move (especially bending/twisting), the wire may move slightly in relation to sacral nerves and the level of stimulation may change so you could feel a sudden increase or decrease in stimulation.

This is normal but could feel uncomfortable and give you a surprise and make you jerk suddenly.

For this reason do not drive or operate heavy machinery or dangerous equipment during the test period. If for any reason, you suffer any of the above, turn the stimulator off and on again.

Level of activity
The temporary wire is not stitched in place and is only held in place by the dressings covering the area.

To avoid dislodging the lead:
Limit your level of activity to low or moderate. For example, filling the kettle is fine but avoid lifting anything heavier, ie wet washing. Gentle walking is okay, but avoid more vigorous exercise, such as aerobic exercise or sexual intercourse.

Make sure the area around the wire is kept dry/undisturbed; this will also help prevent infection.

Under no circumstances should you remove the dressing. If it becomes loose, just stick it down.

Bearing the above in mind, it is important that you continue with your usual activities so don’t just sit in a chair for the entire testing period without moving as we will not get a true picture of how the stimulation is affecting your incontinence.

Eat and drink as normal.

Take medications as you normally would.

Who can I contact for more help or information?

**Oncology nurses**

Uro-oncology nurse specialist
01223 586748

Bladder cancer nurse practitioner (haematuria, chemotherapy and BCG)
01223 274608

Prostate cancer nurse practitioner
01223 274608 or 216897 or bleep 154-548

Surgical care practitioner
01223 348590 or 256157 or bleep 154-351

**Non-oncology nurses**

Urology nurse practitioner (incontinence, urodynamics, catheter patients)
01223 274608 or 586748 or bleep 157-237

Urology nurse practitioner (stoma care)
01223 349800

Urology nurse practitioner (stone disease)
01223 349800 or bleep 152-879

**Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)**

Telephone: +44 (0)1223 216756

PatientLine: *801 (from patient bedside telephones only)

email: pals@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Mail: PALS, Box No 53

Addenbrooke’s Hospital

Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ
Chaplaincy and multi faith community
Telephone: +44 (0)1223 217769
email: chaplaincy@addenbrookes.nhs.uk
Mail: The Chaplaincy, Box No 105
Addenbrooke’s Hospital
Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ

MINICOM System (‘type’ system for the hard of hearing)
Telephone: +44 (0)1223 217589

Access office (travel, parking and security information)
Telephone: +44 (0)1223 596060

We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site. For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:
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For Large Print information please contact the patient information team: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk