



Painless



FACTSHEET

Percutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (PENS)

Neuromodulation or ‘stimulator’ implants have been used for a very long time to treat complex, treatment-resistant pain. This factsheet explains how and why you may consider this procedure, as well as the potential risks and recovery requirements.

Regional pain refers to any persistent pain condition involving specific regions of the body, outside of the spine. It includes conditions such as complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS), peripheral neuropathy, headaches, or abdominal pain. There are various procedural approaches that may be used as part of a multidisciplinary treatment plan to treat regional pain conditions.

If you have undergone lifestyle changes with limited success, we may consider percutaneous electrical nerves stimulation (PENS) for persistent regional pain. PENS may be used for various forms of regional pain, including shoulder pain, lower limb pain, chest pain and post-herpetic neuralgia.

The procedure works by targeting the few select nerves that connect your brain to the region of your body effected by pain. Using pulsed radio waves, it modulates the nerves’ function to prevent pain signals being transmitted to your brain.

The procedure is effective at reducing pain both in the area connected to the target nerve and the pain caused by damage to the nerve itself.

CONDITIONS TREATED WITH PENS

- Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)
- Allodynia And Hyperalgesia
- Peripheral Neuropathy
- Occipital Neuralgia
- Supra-Orbital Neuralgia

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- Post-Hepatic Neuralgia
- Intractable Facial Pain
- Cluster Headaches
- Post Hernia Repair Pain
- Post Mastectomy Pain
- Shoulder Pain
- Chest Pain
- Lower Limb Pain
- Pelvic Pain
- Abdominal Pain
- Among Others

STEP BY STEP

The procedure will vary slightly depending on which region of the body is being targeted. However, they all follow the following structure:

1. Medical imaging is used to place the probes against the pain-generating nerve(s).
2. Low heat is applied to the nerve(s) in short bursts for 25 minutes using a machine that emits pulsed radiofrequency waves.
3. The probes are removed, and the procedure is complete. You will be moved to the recovery room where you will wake.

WHAT TO EXPECT

PENS procedures are slightly more uncomfortable than other regional procedures. You may experience an increase in pain for several days afterwards. The beneficial effects of the procedure begin to occur within seven days and reach their full effect within four to six weeks.

The effects vary significantly between individuals. Some people experience only a few weeks of pain relief, while others achieve six to 18 months of relief. The effects will depend upon your specific pain condition as well as which nerves the procedure targets.

SIDE EFFECTS

You may experience tenderness and bruising over the site of the needles as well as increased joint pain for several days after the procedure. Less commonly, some people experience increased sensitivity to pain over the procedure area for one to four weeks