

Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) is a method of pain relief involving the use of a mild electrical current.

TENS may be able to help reduce pain and muscle spasms caused by a wide range of conditions including:

- arthritis
- period pain
- pelvic pain caused by endometriosis
- knee pain
- neck pain
- back pain
- sports injuries

A TENS machine is a small, battery-operated device that has leads connected to sticky pads called electrodes. You attach the pads directly to your skin. When the machine is switched on, small electrical impulses are delivered to the affected area of your body, which you feel as a tingling sensation. The electrical impulses can reduce the pain signals going to the spinal cord and brain, which may help relieve pain and relax muscles. They may also stimulate the production of endorphins, which are the body's natural painkillers. The machine can be used continuously or intermittently throughout the day. The machine remains in your pocket and you can continue your general activity whilst the TENS machine is on. TENS isn't a cure for pain and often only provides short-term relief while the TENS machine is being used. You need to place the pads as advised by the doctor before wearing your clothes and then the machine can be switched on. Never place the pads over: the front or sides of front neck, temples, mouth or eyes, chest and upper back at the same time, irritated, infected or broken skin, varicose veins, numb areas. Turn on the TENS machine when the pads are attached in the correct places. You'll feel a slight tingling sensation pass through your skin.

TENS is a safe treatment with no side effects. Some people may be allergic to the pads.

Don't use it without first seeking medical advice if:

- you have a pacemaker or another type of electrical or metal implant in your body
- you're pregnant, or there's a chance you might be pregnant – TENS may not be recommended early in pregnancy
- you have epilepsy or a heart problem