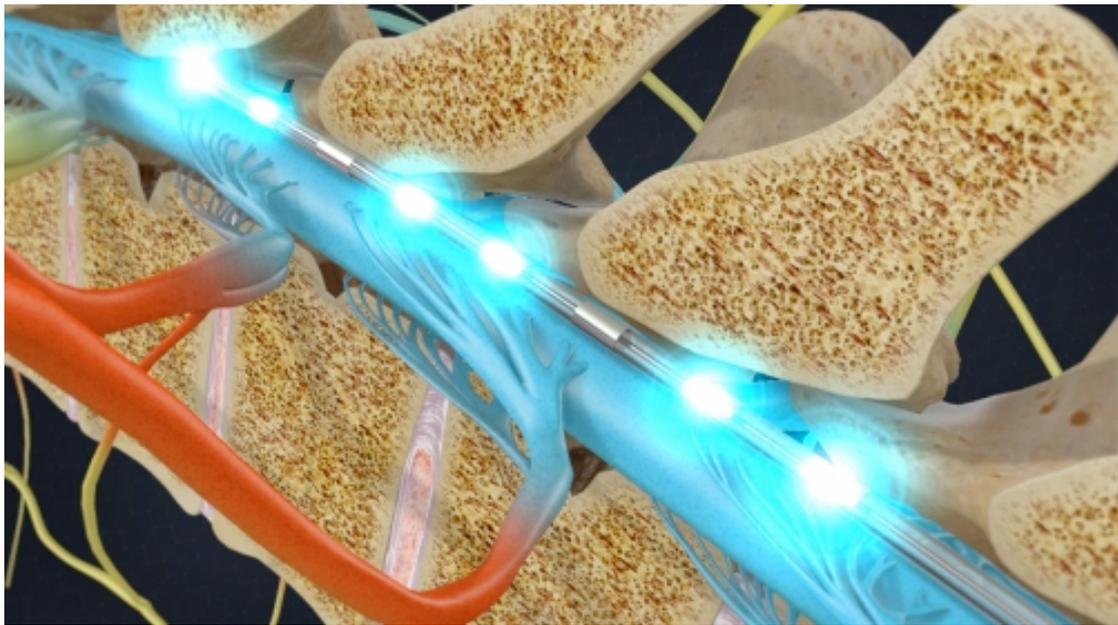




Spinal Cord Stimulator Trial



What is Spinal Cord Stimulation?

Spinal Cord Stimulation is a technology that aims to reduce pain by electrically modifying (reducing) pain signals in the spinal cord. This technology can also be used to reduce pain signals in the dorsal root ganglion (Dorsal Root Ganglion or DRG Stimulation) or peripheral nerves (Peripheral Nerve Stimulation). Traditional low frequency stimulation produces a pleasant tingling sensation in the area of pain, whereas more recent technologies can reduce your pain without the tingling.

Your doctor will discuss with you the best options for your pain and will recommend the type of therapy that is best suited for you.

Spinal cord stimulation is usually not suitable for persons with lowered immunity (including smoking), bleeding disorders, active infection, or anyone who is pregnant.

It is essential that you have a trial of spinal cord stimulation before you decide to proceed to a full implantation. A trial is performed to assess whether the stimulator will be effective in reducing your pain. A successful trial is characterised by a marked reduction in pain (greater than 50%), an ability to do more functionally, and often a reduction in pain medication use.

A trial starts with a procedure in an operating theatre under sedation, and involves the placement of stimulator leads near the spinal cord (in the epidural space), near to the nerves or under the skin, depending on your pain condition.

How long will the pain relief last after a Spinal Cord Stimulator Trial?

The procedure usually requires an overnight stay in hospital and the trial typically lasts seven days. However, you may experience a reduction in your pain levels that continues for many days after the trial has been completed.

Will I be awake during the procedure?

The procedure is performed under sedation. You will likely have little or no memory of the procedure, however this is not guaranteed (especially if a deeper sedation is not safe for you).

Is the procedure painful?

Local anaesthetic (numbing) injections are administered at the start of the procedure. You may experience some discomfort during the procedure.

How do I prepare for the procedure?

Please advise staff if you are:

- Taking blood thinners. These will need to be stopped for some time prior to the procedure. You may need to transition to another form of blood thinner leading up to the surgery.
- A smoker. You will need to quit for some time prior to the trial and commit to remain off the cigarettes.
- Diabetic.
- Pregnant (or any chance of you being pregnant).
- Allergic to iodine, latex, shellfish, local anaesthetics, or anything else.
- Unwell (especially if you have an infection).
- Implanted with any other medical device.

Staff may advise you to:

- Avoid eating for 6 hours prior to the procedure (You will be told the exact time to start fasting).
- In most cases it is OK to drink clear fluids until 3 hours prior to your procedure time (e.g. water, clear cordial, black tea).
- Take your usual medications (unless advised otherwise).

What does the procedure involve?

After arriving and completing the necessary paperwork:

- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown
- You will meet the anaesthetist and he/she will speak with you about the anaesthetic.
- A small cannula will be inserted into one of your veins to administer the anaesthetics medicines.
- Your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen levels are continuously monitored throughout the procedure.
- You will lie face-down on an x-ray table, the skin over the area to be injected is cleaned with an antiseptic solution, and sterile drapes applied.
- A local anaesthetic will be injected into your skin.
- The leads will be inserted via a needle using an X-ray machine to guide them into the correct position.
- The leads will be stitched at the skin to hold them in position.

- Once the leads are in position a waterproof dressing will be placed over your skin where the leads are inserted.
- You will be transferred from the procedure room into the recovery area to wake up.
- The procedure usually takes 60-90 minutes, plus recovery time.

What are the potential complications?

This procedure is generally very safe. However all invasive procedures carry the risk of complications. In general the risk is low, but includes a number of potential complications, some of which can be quite serious.

Please discuss with your doctor any questions or concerns that you may have about your procedure or this information sheet.

Before the procedure is performed, you will be asked to sign a consent form, requesting to have the procedure. The consent form will spell out any potential complications under the following headings:

- Common side effects
- Less common side effects
- Rare side effects
- Potential side effects specific to you

You should take your time reading the consent form as it is very important that you have been fully informed about the potential benefits, risks, alternatives, and what the most likely course of events are if you do not want to go ahead with the procedure.

There are risks associated with having sedation. You should discuss these with your anaesthetist.

You can withdraw consent at any stage up to the start of the procedure.

What happens after the procedure?

In recovery

- You may be seen by the representative from the stimulator company who will commence the programming of your stimulator. This may be delayed until the following morning.
- When you are fully awake, you will be transferred to the ward where you will remain overnight.

On the ward

- You will be able to get out of bed. If you feel unsteady, please use your call bell for assistance from a nurse. It is important that you avoid bending and twisting the area where the leads have been inserted as this has the potential to move the leads from their precisely placed position.
- The morning after your procedure you may be taken to the X-ray department for a check X-ray of the stimulator lead positions.
- You will be seen by your doctor, pain clinic nurse and the representative from the stimulator company. If it has not already been done, your trial stimulator will be programmed and you will be instructed on the use of the remote control. You will be given a diary to complete on a daily basis throughout the trial period.
- Depending on the arrangements that you made prior to your procedure you may be discharged or you may remain in hospital for the duration of the trial.

- You will have received sedative medicines during your procedure; the effects of these medications may last for up to 24 hours. You may not remember some of the information given during the procedure. This is a normal side effect of the medication. For the 24 hours following the anaesthetic you should not drive a vehicle, drink alcohol, operate machinery, make important decisions, sign legal documents or travel unaccompanied.

Throughout the trial

- It is important to keep the dressing dry at all times. You must avoid showering and bathing for the duration of the trial.
- You must avoid any bending, twisting or stretching of your arms above your head during the trial. Do not lift anything heavier than 2.5 kilograms in weight.
- You will be reviewed by your pain clinic nurse and representative on day four.
- At the completion of the trial your leads will be removed. You do not need to fast for removal of the leads.
- An X-ray may be taken to check the position of your leads prior to their removal.
- Your leads will be removed and a small dressing will be placed over the lead insertion site. You are able to remove the dressing 24 hours later.
- You will be able to shower after the leads are removed.
- After the leads are removed you will be able to recommence any blood thinners you were required to stop. Please talk to your doctor or pain clinic nurse.
- If you have severe pain, or notice any swelling, discharge or bleeding from the site or have any other concerns, please contact QPain, your General Practitioner, or the Emergency Department of your local hospital.

After the trial

It is important that you arrange a review appointment with your pain specialist following your trial to discuss the next steps in your pain management plan. On occasion it might be necessary to trial more than one type of stimulator to achieve optimal reduction of your pain.



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