

TENS Therapy

Q: What is TENS therapy?

A: It is a therapeutic treatment that stands for transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation. TENS units are about the size of a pocket pager and can be worn constantly throughout the day. TENS is an excellent, non-drug alternative for chronic pain such as lower-back ache and arthritis. It is also useful in relieving acute pain caused by childbirth, surgery, traumatic injury and other conditions.

Q: How does TENS therapy work?

A: The TENS unit produces a mild electrical current that is delivered to the nerve fibers through 4 electrodes applied to the skin. These electronic signals are stronger than the pain signal the body produces, therefore blocking the pain signal from reaching the brain. The result is reduced pain in most cases.

Q: What does TENS therapy feel like?

A: TENS can be administered in two ways: standard or low-frequency. Standard or high-frequency treatment uses 60 pulses of electricity per second. This produces a steady buzzing or tingling sensation between the electrodes. Most patients find this method produces the fastest, longest-lasting pain relief. The second method, low-frequency or burst treatment, delivers 10 or fewer pulses per second to the painful area. The sensation at burst mode is similar to a tapping or pulsing. The body reacts to the stimulation by releasing endorphins, which are natural pain-killing chemicals. Though this type of treatment sometimes takes longer to achieve, patients find its effects last for a longer period of time.