

Using a Spinal Cord Stimulator to Manage Pain

General Information

A spinal cord stimulator is one option to manage chronic pain. The device treats pain in the spine, arm and leg. The device gives off electrical pulses that work to stop pain signals to the brain.

Your health care provider may suggest a spinal cord stimulator when treatment options such as physical therapy, injections, medicines and surgery have not worked well.

Testing the Device

Before you receive a device, a test is done to see if this treatment will help you feel less pain. A health care provider will place wires (leads) in the area in which you feel pain. A battery is connected to the leads and placed on the outside of your body.

A health care provider will remove the leads after 5 to 7 days. If the device helps you feel a lot less pain he or she will talk with you about a second surgery.

During that surgery you will have a device placed which can remain in your body for a long time.

Spinal Cord Stimulator Surgery

If a spinal cord stimulator is approved, your surgeon will place a permanent device in your body. During surgery, he or she will:

- make a small cut (incision) on your back or neck
- remove a small piece of vertebrae (lamina).
- guide the leads into your spine with the use of X-ray imaging
- make another small incision in your low back to place the battery
- connect the leads to the battery
- close both incisions.

After Surgery

You can usually return home the same day you have surgery.

You will be scheduled for a follow up appointment 2 weeks after surgery. During that visit you will meet with your health care provider and a technician from the device company who will turn on the device.

Whom to Call With Questions

Talk with your health care team if you have any questions or concerns.