Home Care after Spinal Cord Stimulator Trial

The spinal cord stimulator trial is used to find out if this treatment will reduce your pain. You will go home with your trial leads in place. The trial most often lasts one week.

Your feedback during the trial is vital to your doctors.

- See the physical therapist during the trial to find out if your function is improved with the treatment.
- Fill out the Pain Log for the length of the trial.
- Reduce and keep track of your pain medicines as instructed by your doctor.
- Learn what settings of spinal cord stimulation work for you as you adjust the controller in response to your activities, body positions, and changes in pain.

You may have pain in your back where the leads exit. It is okay to use Tylenol® or ice to ease this pain. Avoid aspirin which increases bleeding. You will need to carefully watch your symptoms to decide what pain is caused by inserting the spinal cord stimulator and what pain is your normal, chronic pain.

You will have an incision in your back where the spinal cord stimulator leads exit. This will be covered by a bandage. You will need to take very good care of the site to avoid complications like infection or bleeding.

- Keep the area covered for the entire trial with the original bandage. If the bandage becomes soiled, dislodged, or wet you will need to call the Interventional Pain team.
- You may not shower, soak in the tub, or go swimming for the time of the trial. You are encouraged to keep yourself clean with sponge baths.

You will need to restrict your activities during the trial period. This is so the leads in your back don’t move. If the leads move too much, you can lose stimulation.

- Do not drive. Limit riding in the car to those trips that are absolutely necessary.

- Do not raise your arms above your head.
- Do not twist, bend, or stretch your body at the waist. When rolling over, keep your body straight. Sitting in a chair is fine as long as you are careful.
- Do not make any sudden movements.
- Do not lift items weighing more than 5 pounds.
- Do not strain when moving your bowels. Take laxatives if needed.
You will need to watch the site to make sure everything is healing well. Look at the site daily. Do not remove the bandage. Call the Interventional Pain team if you have:

- Pus-like drainage.
- Fever (oral temperature greater than 100.4°F or 38.0°C for two readings taken 4 hours apart).
- Site is red or warm to touch.
- Excess swelling, bruising, or bleeding.
- Pain you cannot control.

You will need to return in one week to discuss the results of your trial. Your trial spinal cord stimulator leads will be removed at this visit. If you lose stimulation at any time during the trial call the clinic.

Phone Numbers

Dr Sehgal – (608) 263-9550
Dr Leonard – (608) 265-3207
Dr Simhan – (608) 263-9550
Dr Holz – (608) 265-3207
Dr Abd-Elsayed – (608) 263-9550
Dr Poliak-Tunis – (608) 263-9550

After hours, nights and weekends, call (608)-262-0486 or if you live out of the area, call 1-800-323-8942 - ask for the rehabilitation doctor on call. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.