

A guide to electrical stimulation

Your physiotherapist has suggested you may benefit from using an electrical stimulator device (sometimes referred to as neuro muscular electrical stimulation) to improve your condition. This leaflet explains what electrical stimulation is and how to use the machine. It is very important you read this information leaflet to ensure you are doing everything right. If you have any questions, please speak to the therapist caring for you.

What is electrical stimulation?

As a treatment for your symptoms, electrical stimulation involves passing a small electrical current through the muscles of the pelvic floor. This makes the muscles contract and can therefore help to improve your pelvic floor strength and support. It can also help reduce your urgency to go to the toilet.

What does the treatment involve?

Once you consent (agree) to have the treatment, we will loan you a stimulation machine from the hospital. We will also give you a reusable probe for you to use with the machine. You must not share this with anyone else.

Your treatment course could last up to six weeks, depending on your symptoms and progress. We will ask you to use the machine once a day. Try to use it at least four to five times a week. **Start with 10 minutes for the first few days, and if you have no problems, gradually increase the minutes until you are up to 20 minutes. The machine turns off after 20 minutes.**

How do I use the machine?

Your therapist will examine your muscles and give you detailed instructions on how to use your machine correctly. The instructions below are given as a reminder should you forget what to do after you have left the hospital.

You will need to purchase some water-based lubrication gel. This can be found online or ask your pharmacist.

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Prior to switching on machine:

1. Insert the lead wires into port (top of machine)
2. Put some lubrication jelly onto the metal parts of the vaginal probe, making sure that the surfaces are completely covered.
3. Insert the probe into your vagina with the metal parts facing each hip.
4. Connect the wires on the vaginal probe to the machine

Now switch on machine by pressing the power button.

5. Start the programme by pressing the + button on the same side that the wire is plugged into and keep pressing it until you reach a comfortable intensity. It will feel like a tingling sensation at first building up to a pulling /tightening sensation
6. When you have learnt what it feels like to contract your pelvic floor muscles try to tighten your muscles when the machine is working

(If you don't touch the buttons for a few minutes the keypad will lock as a safety feature. To unlock it press the -ve button to unlock).

7. After use turn the machine off. If using it for the full 20 minutes it will automatically turn off
8. First, remove the equipment cable and then the probe from your vagina
9. Clean and dry the probe as instructed below and store in its packaging separate from the stimulator

The programme chosen for me is:

Don't forget to perform your pelvic floor exercises 3-4 times a day without the machine.

Cleaning the probe

This must be washed in warm soapy water at the end of each treatment session. Try not to immerse the leads in the water. Dry the probe and store it in some kitchen towels in its packet until your next treatment.

Are there any risks?

The treatment does not generally cause any problems. However, if you experience any of the following while using the machine, stop using it and contact your therapist.

- Vaginal irritation
- Pain
- Bleeding



When should I not use the machine?

The therapist will check whether it is safe for you to use the machine. However, there are certain situations which mean you should not have electrical stimulation. Speak to your therapist if the following have not already been discussed and you have:

- A pacemaker/electrical implant
- A vaginal or urinary infection
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Haemophilia
- History of pelvic cancer
- A current abnormal smear
- Reduced skin sensation
- If you become pregnant

Follow up appointments

You will be given another appointment either during or at the end of your trial with the machine. Always bring the probe and machine to your next appointment. There is a waiting list for the machine and delaying the return of the machine affects the care of other patients. Thanks for your cooperation.

If you have any concerns or queries call the Bladder and Bowel service and ask to speak to Tarla Schiller, Pelvic Health Physiotherapist on **0151 514 2222**.

If you would like this information in another format or language, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net

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