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Piedmont Comprehensive
Pain Management Group LLC

managing your pain
improving your quality of life



Spinal Cord Stimulation

What is Spinal Cord Stimulation?

Spinal cord stimulation (SCS) therapy uses an implanted device to deliver low levels of electrical energy to nerve fibers. These low voltage electrical signals prevent messages of pain from reaching the brain. SCS devices are approved by the U.S. FDA for the treatment of chronic pain of the arms, legs, and trunk, or pain resulting from failed back surgery. Spinal cord stimulators were first utilized to treat pain in 1967. Since that time, there have been dramatic leaps in SCS technology. Developments have led to more stimulation coverage and better outcomes. Spinal cord stimulators can provide considerable pain relief where other previously attempted therapies have failed. Although not considered a cure, SCS therapy can successfully decrease pain that is caused by dysfunction or damage to the nervous system. Most patients see a 50% to 70% decrease in pain which can have significant impact in your life by making your pain more manageable. SCS therapy is a reversible, minimally invasive approach to treating pain that aims to reduce suffering, improve function, reduce healthcare utilization, reduce opioid dependency, and improve quality of life.

What does a Spinal Cord Stimulation Device involve?

The SCS device consists of electric leads (wires) placed beside the spinal cord. The leads are connected to a generator that transmits an electrical current to the spinal cord which replaces pain with mild tingling or massaging sensation. The amplitude strength and rate of the electric pulse of a spinal cord stimulator can be set and controlled by an external programming device. Your SCS device will be programmed by your physician and a device technician according to your personal pain needs. You will be given a remote control device that can be utilized to turn the device on and off and to select among preset stimulation programs.

The Spinal Cord Stimulation Trial

It is important to understand that not everyone will benefit from SCS therapy, and for this reason you will be required to complete a *Spinal Cord Stimulation Trial*. Your PCPMG physician will implant a temporary stimulator to determine if you are a good candidate for a permanent implant. The device will be implanted via an outpatient procedure which will last about one hour. You will be awake during the procedure so that you can communicate with your physician to ensure ideal placement. A successful trial will result in acceptable pain relief, good global satisfaction, and improved function. If these goals are met, you will be scheduled to receive a permanent SCS implant. Many insurance plans require you to undergo a psychological evaluation prior to permanent implantation. This is standard protocol and should be expected.

Common Risks Associated with a Spinal Cord Stimulation Implant

SCS implantation is considered safe. However, with any procedure there are associated risks. Common risks/side effects include: bleeding, infection, pain at the incision site, postdural puncture headache, and undesirable or unpleasant stimulation sensations.

Pre and Post Procedure Instructions

- Bring a driver the day of your trial. The procedure will be rescheduled if you do not have a driver. Please do not drive for the duration of your trial. If driving cannot be avoided, always turn the device OFF to do so.
- Discuss any anti-coagulants (*blood thinners*) that you are currently taking with your physician. It may or may not be necessary to discontinue some of these medications for a short time prior to this procedure.
- Do not work the day of your procedure or the following day. Depending on how you feel, you may work on the third day, but if possible it is a good idea to stay out of work for the duration of your trial.
- During your trial there is a 2 to 5 pound weight limit on lifting. No bending, twisting, over-head lifting, ladder climbing, or sitting more than 30 to 45 minutes. You may attempt steps and inclines, but please avoid any sudden position changes.
- No showers, tub baths, pool, or hot tub during the trial. You may sponge bath only.
- Take and finish all antibiotics prescribed by the doctor.
- Do not change or remove dressing. If necessary, you may reinforce dressing with additional dressing or tape.
- Use ice if necessary, but do NOT use heat or heating pads on site.
- Do not sleep on your stomach during the trial. You may sleep on your side or back.
- Expect some pain at lead site, this is normal.
- Maintain a healthy diet during the trial.
- After initial recovery, it is important to attempt some of your daily activities within the restrictions listed above. This will allow you and your doctor to know if spinal cord stimulation works for you by reducing your pain and increasing your function.

If you have any questions regarding your procedure, do not hesitate to contact us.