

Information for Patients

Guidance for Using an Electrical Stimulation Treatment Device at Home

Physiotherapy Service

This leaflet explains what electrical stimulation involves and how to use the stimulation device/machine at home.

It is very important **that you read this information leaflet and the manufacturer's instructions provided with the stimulation machine and probe.** This will make sure you are using it correctly. If you have any questions, please speak to your physiotherapist.

What is electrical stimulation?

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

Your physiotherapist may have recommended electrical stimulation because you have difficulty finding or contracting your pelvic floor muscles. You may have already had treatment and this is being suggested to improve your symptoms further. Alternatively, you may be recommended electrical stimulation at the same time as another treatment.

What are the alternatives?

Other forms of treatment include pelvic floor exercises, bladder retraining, medication, and general fluid and health promotion advice. Please ask questions if you are not sure what your treatment options are.

Are there any risks?

The treatment does not generally cause any problems. You may notice an increase in your normal vaginal discharge. However, if you experience any of the following while using the machine, **stop using it and contact your physiotherapist:**

- vaginal irritation or discomfort
- pain
- bleeding

- If your symptoms worsen or you are unsure how to use the device

Can I use the machine while I am having my period?

Although it is possible to use the machine during your period, many of the probes (such as the Periform probe) cannot be used at this time. Check with your physiotherapist if you are unsure.

When should I not use the machine?

The physiotherapist assessing you will make sure that it is safe for you to use the machine. There are certain situations or conditions which mean you should not use electrical stimulation. Please speak to your physiotherapist if you have:

- an allergy to nickel or latex or lubricant gel
- if you are pregnant or trying to conceive (get pregnant)
- if you have a coil for contraceptive use that contains metal (a Mirena does not contain metal)
- a lack of sensation (feeling) in the genital area
- a vaginal infection or a sore vagina
- a history of pelvic cancer
- a pacemaker
- had a baby within the last 12 weeks
- had gynaecological surgery in the last 12 weeks
- had a recent abnormal smear test

What does the treatment involve?

Once you consent (agree) to have the treatment, you will be taught how to use the stimulation unit. You will then be loaned a machine from the hospital. You will also be given a vaginal probe for you to use with it. You must not share this with anyone else and you need to store it separately from the machine.

Your treatment course is likely to last for a few weeks, depending on your symptoms and progress. If possible, use the machine once a day. If you are unable to do that, try to use it at least four to five times a week.

Start with five minutes of electrical stimulation for the first session. Progress to 10 minutes for the second session, 15 minutes for the third and then up to 20 minutes per session for the rest of your treatment. The machine turns off after 20 minutes.

How do I use the machine?

Your physiotherapist will carry out a thorough assessment and give you detailed instructions on how to use the machine correctly. The instructions below are given as a reminder.

1. If necessary, insert the battery into the machine. **Do not leave the battery in the machine for longer than a week at a time without using the machine.**
2. Insert the lead wires into channel A.
3. Wash and dry your hands.
4. Attach the Contraction Indicator (if using) to the vaginal probe following the manufacturer's instructions.
5. Ensure the probe is well coated with lubricant gel, especially over the metal surfaces.
6. Insert the probe into your vagina with the metal parts facing each hip. Do not place it too far into your vagina. Your physiotherapist will have explained how far to insert the probe. **Do not insert the probe into the vagina with the machine attached and turned on.**
7. Ensure the device is turned off (the screen should be blank), then connect the wires on the probe to the device cable wires.
8. Switch on the unit by pressing the ON/OFF power button on the top of the machine.
9. The programme may have been pre-set for you. If not, press the programme button (PRG) and select the programme that you have been advised to use.

The programme chosen for you is:

10. To start the programme, press the + button on the left side of the unit, and keep pressing it until you reach a strong but comfortable intensity. You will experience a tingling sensation in your vagina when the machine is stimulating your pelvic floor muscles.
11. When you have learnt what it feels like to contract your pelvic floor muscles, you can join in and contract your pelvic floor muscles a few times every couple of minutes, when you feel the machine working.
12. At the end of the treatment time the device should automatically turn itself off, however you can immediately stop the treatment at any time by pressing the ON/OFF button.
13. Remove the probe, making sure not to pull on the leads and then disconnect the probe cable ends from the device cable ends.

How do I clean the probe?

Wash the probe in warm soapy water, rinse in clean water and dry the probe thoroughly before storing it. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. **DO NOT USE BOILING WATER.** Repeat this cleaning process after each use.

Always **store the probe separately from the device** in a clean food bag.

Follow-up appointments

You will be given an appointment to check on your progress. If this appointment is in the physiotherapy department please remember to bring the machine and your vaginal probe with you.

Also, continue with your own pelvic floor exercises three times during the day without the machine, if you can. Your physiotherapist will have already explained how to do pelvic floor exercises.

IMPORTANT

If at any time you experience any pain, discomfort, unexpected bleeding or irritation, STOP using the device and contact your Physiotherapist:

Physiotherapist Name: _____

Tel No: _____

Out of hours, please leave a message and a member of staff will call you back in working hours.

“This document is available in Welsh / Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”