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Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) in Labour

TENS is a small battery operated device that sends electrical impulses to the body through electrode pads for pain relief.

Why choose TENS in labour?

TENS is a non-drug option for pain control that has no harmful effects on the mother or the baby.

It is quick and effective, easy to use, lightweight and portable.

TENS does not cause drowsiness.

It can be used for as long as pain relief is required and can be taken off at any time.

The intensity of the TENS is controlled by the mother. There is a boost option that allows the woman to switch quickly between different currents.

TENS can be applied at home when contractions start or later at hospital.

It can be used with other methods of pain relief (although it is stopped if an epidural is required).

TENS allows the freedom to move and walk around during labour.

How does TENS work in labour?

The TENS machine creates tiny electrical impulses that are sent through the skin to the nerves. This is felt as a tingling sensation on the skin. When applied correctly, it is thought that TENS decreases the brain's perception of pain from the uterus, cervix and vagina. The electrical stimulation provided by a TENS machine also causes your body to produce natural pain relievers called endorphins. TENS can provide a sense of control over labour pain and gives an alternate focus during contractions.

Who shouldn't use a TENS in labour?

TENS should not be used if you have:

- A cardiac pacemaker
- Metal in vicinity of the pelvis
- Previous pelvic tumours
- Some forms of epilepsy

How do I use a TENS machine in labour?

All women who are considering using a TENS machine in labour are encouraged to attend a TENS education session, run by trained Physiotherapists.

A limited number of TENS units will be available at the session to trial, or you may bring your own TENS unit to the session.

Bookings are essential to reserve your place via Women's Health Physiotherapy Reception (08) 8161 7579.

Where can I get an obstetric TENS?

Obstetric TENS machines are available for hire from the WCH Home Equipment Centre, private hire companies and private Women's Health Physiotherapy clinics.

Hire from WCH Home Equipment Centre

A referral/hire form must be completed and signed by your doctor, midwife or treating physiotherapist.

For more information
Women's Physiotherapy
Women's and Children's Hospital
72 King William Rd, North Adelaide SA 5006
Telephone (08) 8161 7579
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Women's and Children's Health Network

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Hire from WCH Home Equipment Centre

Attendance at the Physiotherapy TENS education class or individual education from your doctor or midwife is compulsory prior to hiring of a TENS machine from the WCH Home Equipment Centre.

TENS machines hired from WCH Home Equipment Centre must be kept in the plastic bag provided and this must remain sealed at all times during use for infection control purposes.

WCH Home Equipment Centre

Ground Floor, Samuel Way Building

Phone (08)81616233

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