

Spinal Cord Stimulator



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What is Spinal Cord Stimulation?

If you or someone you care about has been living with chronic pain, spinal cord stimulation (SCS) may provide new hope. Spinal cord stimulation is a medical therapy for people who suffer from certain types of chronic neuropathic pain. SCS is not a cure for pain. The objective with this therapy is to reduce a patient's discomfort to a manageable level, so the patient can return to a more normal lifestyle.

Spinal cord stimulation is actually part of a broader category of therapies called neurostimulation, which includes peripheral nerve stimulation. Neurostimulation therapies are used for pain relief or symptom relief from certain types of chronic pain and neurological disorders.

Spinal cord stimulation and peripheral nerve stimulation use an implanted device—a spinal cord stimulator (sometimes called a pacemaker for pain)—to deliver low levels of electrical energy directly to nerve fibers. This direct approach to treating pain at its source can be very effective.

The type of neurostimulation that might be appropriate for your condition depends upon many factors, including the cause of your pain or neurologic disorder as well as its type and location.

A Treatment with Real Advantages

Spinal cord stimulation has three significant advantages. First, it can be very effective in reducing chronic pain from certain conditions. Second, you will have an SCS trial before you have a permanent system implanted. An SCS trial allows you to determine if the therapy will work for you. And lastly, the implanted device can be turned off permanently or removed if you do not achieve the desired level of relief.

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How Does Spinal Cord Stimulation Work?

To understand how spinal cord stimulation (SCS) works, it is helpful to understand the components of a spinal cord stimulation system. SCS systems typically consist of three components designed to work together:

Leads

A generator/receiver

A programmer/transmitter

Obtaining a SCS system involves a relatively short surgical procedure during which a lead or leads are placed in the space above of the spinal column (epidural space) and a generator/receiver is inserted under the skin. The leads are connected to the generator/receiver. When the generator/receiver's power is turned on, electrical energy is sent through the leads to electrodes that stimulate the nerve fibers associated with painful areas.

This stimulation effectively changes the pain messages and replaces them with a more pleasant sensation called paresthesia. If a patient likes the stimulation sensation, and it helps to relieve his or her pain, then spinal cord stimulation is a good option. For some patients, however, the sensation is not pleasant and/or it does not relieve pain. That is why a trial procedure is normally performed to determine how a patient will respond to stimulation.

Each type of SCS system has advantages and disadvantages. Should you consider getting a spinal cord stimulator, you and your physician will decide which system is best for your situation. This decision will be based on factors such as your pain pattern, your lifestyle, and how much electrical energy is required to provide adequate pain relief.