

Percutaneous Tibial Nerve Stimulation (PTNS)



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Who is it for?

Percutaneous tibial nerve stimulation (PTNS) is used to treat bowel problems, in particular faecal incontinence. Faecal incontinence is when a person loses the ability to control their bowel movements, resulting in leakage of gas or stool. Faecal incontinence has many different causes and can be very distressing and severely affect everyday life. Initial treatment usually includes dietary management, medication, and pelvic floor/anal sphincter muscle training. If this management is unsuccessful, PTNS may be recommended.

PTNS should not be used in patients with:

- Chronic Fibromyalgia
- Recent kidney stone removed by lithotripsy
- Knee replacements
- Nerve damage

What is PTNS?

PTNS is a form of treatment which is called neuromodulation. Bowel function is regulated by a group of nerves at the base of the spine called the sacral nerve plexus. By stimulating these nerves through gentle electrical impulses, the bowel activity can be changed.

PTNS is a minimally invasive procedure carried out in an outpatient setting. It stimulates the nerves in the leg (tibial nerves), which in turn stimulate the sacral nerves.

How is it done?

A small, slim needle electrode (like an acupuncture needle) is temporarily inserted just above the ankle. This is then connected to a battery powered stimulator. The stimulator delivers a mild electric current along the needle into the tibial nerve.

Each treatment session will last approximately 30 minutes. The treatment consists of 12 treatments, one week apart.

What does it feel like?

People respond in different ways, but most patients feel a buzzing, tingling, or throbbing when the machine is turned on.

The current can then be turned down, so that the treatment is comfortable. It is not necessary to feel this throbbing for the whole 30 minutes.

What are the results?

This is a relatively new treatment, but the published studies have shown 3 out of 4 people had a reduction in their faecal incontinence after treatment.

It usually takes between 6 and 10 treatments before any change in symptoms is apparent. It is important that there is no gap in the twelve-week programme, as this can affect the success of

the treatment. If holidays are planned, it is best to delay the start of the treatment until afterwards.

Most patients need to return for booster treatments as the effects start to wear off after 4-6 months.

As it is a new treatment, it is not known how effective it is long term.

How is the treatment done?



Treatment

As this is a new treatment, it is important to collect as much information about your problem both before and after treatment. You will be asked to fill in some assessments/questionnaires about your symptoms and the effect it has on your life.

- You will be asked to sit in a chair or on a couch with the treatment leg elevated.
- The ankle will be cleaned
- The thin needle is inserted above the ankle
- A sticky pad is attached to the arch of the foot
- The leads are then attached to the stimulator
- The stimulator will be turned on and the settings adjusted
- A sensation will be felt in the ankle or foot
- Toes may spread out and curl

The stimulator will deliver 30 minutes of treatment, during this time you can read or do crosswords etc.

After treatment, the needle will be removed, and normal activities can be resumed immediately.

Please report any side effects, you may experience.

If there are any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

What are the risks?

PTNS is a very safe procedure but should not be used for:

- People with pacemakers or implantable defibrillators
- People prone to excessive bleeding
- Women who are pregnant, or planning to become pregnant during the treatment
- Chronic Fibromyalgia
- People with peripheral nerve damage or circulatory problems

Potential side effects:

- Discomfort and pain near the stimulation site
- Redness and inflammation at or near the stimulation site
- Bruising
- Toe numbness
- Stomach-ache

There are currently no recorded serious side effects

What are the benefits?

PTNS is a minimally invasive treatment which can improve the symptoms of bowel leakage and urgency.

Please use this space to write notes or reminders.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

Contact Us

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Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request. For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

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