

SPINAL COLUMN STIMULATOR

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Spinal Column Stimulator? A Spinal Cord Stimulator is a specialized device, which stimulates nerves by tiny electrical impulses via small electrical wires placed within the spinal column.

What is the purpose of it? This device interrupts nerve conduction and changes the pain sensations to a warm tingling or mild massage.

How long does the procedure take? The trial takes about 45 minutes and the permanent an hour to an hour and a half; however the total time you are at the hospital or other facility can be 3-5 hours.

Will the procedure hurt? The procedure involves inserting a needle through skin and deeper tissues. There is some discomfort involved. However, the physician numbs the skin and deeper tissues with a local anesthetic using a very thin needle.

Will I be sedated for this procedure? Yes. This procedure is done under local anesthesia. Most of the patients also receive other medications which make the procedure easier to tolerate. The amount of sedation given generally depends upon patient tolerance.

How is the procedure performed? It is done in two stages. In the first stage, temporary wires are placed and an external device is used to generate electrical current. If this trial is successful in relieving pain, then you will be scheduled for the permanent device. The permanent device is placed under the skin. For both procedures, the wires are placed with the patient lying on their stomach. The skin is cleaned with antiseptic solution and then the procedure is carried out. X-ray (fluoroscopy) is used to guide the needle for wire placement.

Where are the wires inserted? Where is the generator placed? For the pain involving lower back and lower extremities, the wires are inserted in the midline at the lower back. For the pain involving upper extremities, the wires are inserted in the midline at the upper back. The generator is then placed to the side of the spinal cord.

What should I expect after the procedure? If the procedure is successful, you may feel that your pain is gone or quite less. You will experience a fairly constant sensation of stimulation. You may have soreness due to the needles used for a day or two.

How long will the generators last? Depending upon how much the device is used (intensity and duration), the batteries in the generator may last several years. When it is time to have your battery replaced, your doctor will remove the device and replace the battery during a surgical procedure.

What are the risks and side effects? As with any procedure there are risks, side effects, and possibility of complications. The most common side effect is pain-which is temporary. For other risks please speak with a nurse in the office.

What should I do after the procedure? This procedure is normally a day procedure. After a permanent implant, some patients may be kept overnight for observation. You will need a ride home. For the trial, we advise the patients to take it easy for a day or so after the procedure and perform activities as tolerated.

Note: This procedure cannot be performed if you have an active infection, flu, cold, fever, or very high blood pressure. Please make us aware of these conditions.

We hope this information helps.

Please feel free to contact us for any additional concerns you might have.