



Information for
patients and
carers

Spinal Cord Stimulator Trial

Pain Management Services

Understanding the trial

The aim of the spinal cord stimulation (SCS) trial therapy is to use an external stimulator that mimics the actual treatment.

The spinal cord stimulator offers no cure but may offer patients with neuropathic pain a degree of relief from their pain that will enable them to become more active, help improve sleep and possibly reduce their pain medications.

We believe this happens by releasing endorphins which are the body's natural pain killers in the spinal cord and the brain.

How it works

A relatively low risk trial of SCS is usually carried out before considering a permanent implant.

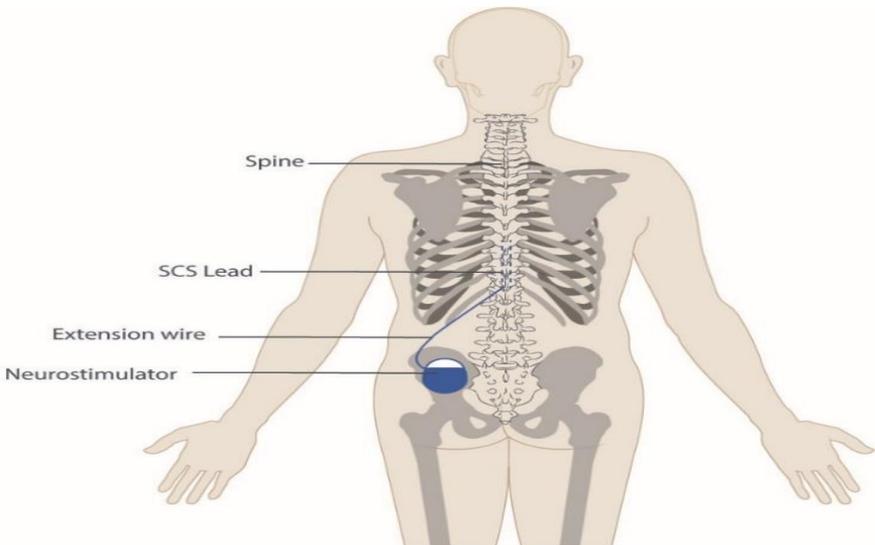


Figure 1: Illustration of placement of the SCS lead, implant in relation to the spinal cord

Mild electrical pulses from an external neurostimulator travel through a temporary lead to the nerves near your spinal cord.

The wireless, handheld therapy programmer lets you adjust the stimulation during the trial, enabling you to experience the different levels of stimulation the system can provide.

The trial lasts up to 2-3 weeks. Afterward, you and your consultant will decide if SCS is right for you and if it is appropriate to proceed with a permanent SCS implant.

Before the trial

You will be asked to attend a SCS education session where you will be educated on spinal cord stimulation by the consultant and clinical nurse specialist before deciding to go ahead with the trial

Discuss your therapy goals with your pain consultant. Make a list of goals you would like to achieve if your pain is managed better; for example, being able to shop for groceries without stopping to rest.

You may receive a workbook to track your pain and any improvement in your day-to-day activities. This will help you and your consultant assess your response to the SCS trial and personalise your therapy.

About the procedure

On the day of the procedure you will be asked to sign a consent form and asked to fill out a pain questionnaire.

Intravenous antibiotics (IV) will be administered to help prevent infections.

You will then be assisted by the theatre staff to lie face down on the theatre table and a cushion will be placed under you.

A local anaesthetic will be injected to numb the skin and X-ray machine will be placed above you helping the consultant accurately see the epidural space.

The SCS lead will be introduced under the guidance of the X-ray and the lead is positioned carefully until a pleasant sensation extends over the pain area.

Your pain consultant places the temporary leads (thin, flexible wires) near your spine using a small insertion device.

As stimulation is applied, your pain consultant will ask how you feel to help determine the best location for the leads.

The leads are connected to an external wireless neurostimulator, which will be secured to your back during the trial. This provides the stimulation therapy.

The procedure to receive the trial system takes about 30 to 90 minutes and is usually done in theatre to minimise the risk of infection. Please do not undergo a trial if you have an active infection on the day of the procedure.

In the recovery room, your device will be programmed to find a setting to determine the therapy that may work for you.

This is a day case procedure you will be able go home on the same day. You will need someone to take you home for example a family member or carer as you should not drive.

Note: These steps may vary depending on your pain consultant.

Things you and your carer will learn after the procedure

- How to use the handheld therapy programmer
- How to care for the area around the leads

- Activities and movements to avoid during the trial period

You may experience some discomfort on your back where the leads were placed. This is temporary and should go away in the hours and days after the procedure. You might also experience some changes in stimulation intensity with certain activities during the trial stage.

At home with your temporary SCS device

Your pain consultant will give you instructions to follow, including any limitations like twisting and heavy lifting, which may dislodge the trial leads.

Generally, you are free to go to work, do your daily routine, and try some activities you have been avoiding because of pain.

The trial system is not waterproof, so you will need to keep it dry. Do not let it come into direct contact with water when showering or bathing.

Complications can occur during the trial, including bleeding, infection, and exacerbation of your pain. Should these symptoms arise please contact the pain management service or contact your GP.

You will be followed up weekly from one the members of pain management team.

The next step – your permanent SCS

At the end of your trial period your pain consultant will remove the temporary leads and discuss your experience with you.

Together, you will decide if a SCS therapy implant is right for you. You and your pain consultant agree this is a way forward for you.

You will then be referred to Neurosurgery Department and be listed for a procedure to have a permanent implant fitted.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact:

Pain Management Services: 01772 522687

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

<https://www.britishpainsociety.org>

<https://www.nevro.com/English/us/home/default.aspx>

<https://www.neuromodulation.abbott/us/en/hcp/products/spinal-column-stimulation-for-chronic-pain.html>

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact the Quit Squad Freephone 0800 328 6297.

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Gujarati:

આ માહિતીને સમજવામાં સહાયતા જોઈતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો. આ માહિતી મોટા છપાણામાં અને અન્ય ભાષામાં ઉપલબ્ધ કરી શકાય છે.

Romanian:

Vă rugăm să întrebați dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru înțelegerea acestor informații. Aceste informații pot fi puse la dispoziție în format mare și în alte limbi.”

Polish:

Poinformuj nas, jeśli potrzebna jest ci pomoc w zrozumieniu tych informacji. Informacje te można również udostępnić dużym drukiem oraz w innych językach

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਸਮਝਣ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮਦਦ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੋਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੁੱਛੋ। ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮੁਹੱਈਆ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

Urdu:

دو سر ی زبانوں او ر بڑی اگر آپ کو ہی معلومات سمجھنے کے لیے مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو یی چھپا یں ییہ ابی دست بو یسکت ہے برا ے مہر یان پو ے یچھہی۔ معلومات

Arabic:

مطبوعة بأحرف كبيرة و بلغات إذا كنت تريد مساعدة في فهم هذه المعلومات يُرجى أن تطلب أخرى يمكن تو فسير هذه المعلومات

Department: Integrated Pain Management Service

Division: Diagnostics and Clinical Support

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