Sacral Nerve Stimulation (SNS)

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE INFORMATION WITHIN THIS LEAFLET IS NOT EXHAUSTIVE AND IS DESIGNED TO COMPLIMENT A CONSULTATION APPOINTMENT WITH THE GI PHYSIOLOGY TEAM. You will be contacted about this appointment separately.

What is sacral nerve stimulation?

Sacral nerve stimulation (SNS) is a treatment for bowel incontinence and in certain cases, constipation, which is considered when conservative management measures have not been successful. An electrode wire is implanted into the lower back / sacral area and delivers continuous pulses to stimulate the pelvic nerves (similar to a pacemaker). These nerves supply the muscles and organs of the pelvic floor and appear to be an important factor in maintaining bladder and bowel control. Power is provided to the electrode via a small battery implanted deep into the buttock. A trial of SNS for 2 weeks using a temporary system helps to determine if it will be beneficial. Permanent SNS requires commitment to safeguard the device and long-term follow up.

Bowel diary

Sacral nerve stimulation (SNS) does not work for everyone, so we assess your bowel function with a bowel diary for two weeks before the test/trial and compare this with a second bowel diary which is completed during the test period. Comparing the diaries help us to determine whether a permanent implant may be suitable for you.

Temporary sacral nerve stimulation

A small operation is performed under general anaesthetic, local anaesthetic, or local anaesthetic with sedation, to insert a fine wire through one of the natural holes in your lower back or sacrum. This is done under Xray guidance in theatre. The wire in your back is only secured in place with a dressing and is attached to a small white external stimulator box which is then placed in belt around your waist.

We switch on the stimulator before you are discharged home that day and show you how to use the hand controller, which allows you to make minor changes to the stimulation or switch it on and off. You must avoid any physical activities which could dislodge the wire and are also advised to switch off the stimulator while driving during the test period. The dressing and wire must not get wet in order to avoid it falling out, so we also ask you not to take a bath or shower during the test period. You should be able to feel a sensation around your bottom area, often described as tingling or fluttering. If the sensation goes away, turn the stimulation up via the hand controller until it can be felt again but is not uncomfortable. Turn the level of stimulation down if you feel any discomfort. Please contact us straightaway if you have any problems during the test period. You will be asked to keep a bowel diary for a 2-week period before your temporary sacral nerve stimulation procedure and during the 2-week temporary/test period.

Battery replacement for Temporary/Trial stimulator

The hand controller will be fully charged when you receive it, but you will need to charge it periodically, just like your mobile phone – the charging unit will be supplied. New batteries will have been placed in the small white external stimulator so it unlikely that these batteries should need to be replaced during a two week trial, however the battery life for each device is displayed at the top of the hand controller screen so you can keep a check. You will be given spare batteries

(2x AAAA) for the white external stimulator should you need to replace them.
Please contact us straightaway if you have any problems during the test period.

Permanent sacral nerve stimulation

If a significant improvement in your bowel symptoms is seen during the temporary/test sacral nerve stimulation period, the Pelvic Floor Multi-Disciplinary Team will consider you for a permanent sacral nerve stimulation implant. Recent advances in this technology mean that a permanent sacral nerve implant is now MRI scan safe and a rechargeable system is now available and may be suitable for some patients. More information will be given regarding this at the time. Please note that you should not travel aboard within 6 weeks of having a permanent sacral nerve stimulation implant.

Potential risks and benefits

This procedure carries the potential for the following risks: anaesthetic risk, infection, device movement, nerve pain or damage. These will be discussed with you at your consultation.
The benefit is an anticipated improvement in your bowel function and quality of life.

Other alternatives to sacral nerve stimulation

Several other treatment options are available and will be discussed with you. Please note that the suitability of each will have been considered for each individual patient by their Pelvic Floor Consultant and Multidisciplinary Team.

Accessibility



To view this information in a different language or use text-to-speech reader visit **www.uhb.nhs.uk,** click the yellow and black circular icon in the bottom right of the web page to open the ReachDeck toolbar and then use the search bar to search by the name of the leaflet. If you require this information in another format such as braille, please email **interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk.**

How did we do? ☺😐☹

If you have recently used our services we'd love to hear about your experience. Please scan the QR code or follow the link to share your feedback to help us improve our services. **Thank you. www.uhb.nhs.uk/fft**