



## **Sacral Nerve Stimulation (SNS)**

### **Discharge Information Following a Permanent Implant**

#### **Introduction**

You will probably feel sore after the permanent sacral nerve stimulator is implanted so it will not be switched on at first. You will therefore not see any immediate improvement in your bowel control.

You will have an outpatient appointment after two weeks to check your wounds have healed. The stimulator will be switched on and programmed at this appointment. You will also be given a hand-held device, similar to a mobile phone, and shown how to use it to make small adjustments to the programme or switch the stimulator on or off.

It is normal for it to take up to 8-12 weeks before you notice any improvement in your bowel function once the permanent sacral nerve stimulator is switched on. During this time you may be requested to keep bowel diaries and you will receive scheduled telephone follow up appointments to allow us to track your progress before deciding on making any minor changes.

#### **Wounds**

Your wounds will be tender for a week or so but should then settle down. You may wish to take some simple pain relief tablets as necessary. If your wounds become hot and red, painful or are discharging, you may need antibiotics and you should contact your G.P.

You have a small wound at the base of your back which has one dissolvable stitch. You have a second wound on the upper part of your buttock approximately 5cm long, also with dissolvable stitches. The dressing can be changed after one week. After two weeks it should not be necessary to keep the wounds dressed as they should be healing well.

#### **Washing**

You may shower if the wounds are healed and dry. Otherwise cover them with a waterproof dressing until healed then you should be able to return to your normal shower/bath routine.

#### **If You Work**

We would advise you to take approximately two weeks away from work to recover. Please contact your GP if you need a sick note. Do not undertake any heavy lifting, operate heavy machinery or do any excessive bending or stretching for four weeks.

#### **Fitness and Exercise**

We advise you not to undertake any exercise for three or four weeks while you are healing and your implant is settling in, and to take it easy when restarting exercise. In the long term, strenuous activities such as skiing, contact sports or horse riding may damage or dislodge the implant and require further surgery.

#### **Holidays**

Travelling abroad is restricted during the first 6 weeks of having a permanent sacral nerve stimulation implant. This is to allow time for essential recovery from the procedure and anaesthetic

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and initial post-operative checks. After this period, travelling aboard is not normally restricted.

### Follow up

We will arrange outpatient appointments to review your progress. You may be sent a bowel diary to complete for two weeks prior to each appointment which you should bring with you. At each follow up appointment the battery life of the implant will be checked and any programme adjustments will be made.

**Please contact us if you have any concerns or if you have any problems with your implant even if you are not due for another appointment.**

### Surgery or Scans

You will be given an information booklet at your first programming appointment which should be kept safe after reading. It contains important additional information regarding precautions that you need to know about including the effect of airport screening systems and theft detectors. In the event that you need any investigations or treatment particularly an MRI scan or any form of surgery you must always advise medical staff that you have an implant, and ask them to contact your bowel surgeon and/or the G-I Physiology department that deals with your stimulator for guidance.

### Non Rechargeable and Rechargeable devices

Prior to your Permanent SNS implant your health care professional will have discussed both of these types of devices with you and as far as possible you will have been given the opportunity to consider and choose which device was most suitable. When we switch your device on you will be given further specific instruction relevant to your type of device and any additional equipment.

### Troubleshooting

Although you may be aware of the battery deep inside your buttock you should avoid feeling for it as this may cause problems with its effectiveness. If it does not appear to be working, check first that it is switched on. If you experience pain or discomfort due to the signal strength you should turn it down or off before contacting us.

If you accidentally fall or knock the implant and you are uncomfortable you can turn it off for a while. Turning up the signal strength so the impulse is stronger will not make it work better and can cause damage.

### Contacting Us

#### Good Hope Hospital

Clare Horrobin – Colorectal Nurse Specialist - GI Physiology

Direct line 0121 424 7427 (24hr answerphone)

#### Weekends/Evenings or for Urgent Advice

Surgical Assessment Unit, Birmingham Heartlands Hospital  
0121 424 0211

Surgical Assessment Unit, Good Hope Hospital  
0121 424 7207

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### Further Information

Website information provided by Medtronic Ltd, manufacturer of the SNS device  
[www.bowel-control.co.uk](http://www.bowel-control.co.uk)

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email [patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk).