

TENS in Labour

TENS has been used for many years by pregnant women to manage pain in labour without any reported side-effects for either Mother or baby.

TENS stands for transcutaneous (skin) electrical nerve stimulation.

How does it work?

A small battery operated unit provides a low level pulsed electrical current through electrodes placed on the skin. You will feel a tingling or prickling sensation.

It is thought that the current blocks pain messages going to the brain and also causes naturally occurring pain-relieving substances called endorphins to be released. These endorphins help you to relax and manage your labour pain.

The TENS unit has dials that you can adjust to control the frequency and strength of the electrical pulses and also a small boost button for more difficult contractions.

Advantages

- drug free
- non-invasive
- small and portable
- can be used in conjunction with other pain relieving techniques, e.g. positioning, relaxation, massage or heat
- ready to use
- allows you to keep mobile
- self-controlled

How do I use it?

The TENS works best and gives you the most effective pain relief if you use it at the very beginning of your labour. This gives your body time to produce endorphins.

The TENS is most effective for back pain of labour. Place the electrodes on your lower back where you feel the pain of the contractions.

Do not place the electrodes over the pregnant uterus.

Caution

- The safety of the TENS during pregnancy PRIOR TO 36 weeks has not been completely established, so do not use before 36 weeks of pregnancy without medical advice.
- Do not use the TENS in the bath or the shower
- Do not use the TENS if you have a Cardiac pacemaker

It is best to hire a TENS and practice how to use it at home before you go into labour so that you are completely comfortable with its use.

FMC Birth Assessment Suite (Labour Ward) do have some TENS units available for use in labour, but it is encouraged to bring your own (rental) TENS unit with you, so you can use it when you wish.

The following companies have TENS units for hire. Instructions for applying the electrodes and using the unit will come with the unit.

If you need further help, ask your midwife, physiotherapist or doctor.



For more information

Physiotherapy Department
Flinders Medical Centre
Bedford Park SA 5042
Telephone: 08 8204 5498
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au



Interpreter



<https://creativecommons.org>



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by consumers.