

# Electrical stimulation for the Pelvic Floor and Bladder

## Physiotherapy Patient Information

This leaflet explains what electrical stimulation involves and how to use the stimulation machine. It is important that you read this information along with the information provided by the manufacture of the stimulation kit. Having this information should ensure that you are doing everything correctly. Please ask the physiotherapist if you have any questions.

### **What is electrical stimulation?**

As a treatment for incontinence, electrical stimulation involves passing a small electrical current through the muscles around your bladder, also known as your pelvic floor muscles. This helps to strengthen these muscles if they are very weak by contracting them. This may then help reduce your urgency to go to the toilet.

You may have been recommended electrical stimulation by your Physiotherapist if you have difficulty finding or contracting your pelvic floor muscles. You may have already had treatment, and this is being suggested to improve your symptoms further.

### **How long will I need to use the machine?**

You will have sessions in clinic with the stimulation machine to make sure it's suitable for you. If you and your physiotherapist feel the stimulation machine is improving your symptoms, it may be recommended that you purchase your own electrical stimulation machine. We will give you a reusable probe to use with the stimulation machine, you must not share this with anyone else. Your treatment course could last up to 12 weeks depending on your symptoms and progress.

If you own an electrical stimulation machine, try to use it every day. If you are unable to do that for any reason, use it at least every other day.

## What are the potential risks and side effects?

The physiotherapist will go through all the contraindications and precautions prior to using the electrical stimulation. The only risks may be minor skin irritation and in some instances bleeding, in which case the use of electrical stimulation should be stopped immediately. Sometimes symptoms may worsen initially with its use as the pelvic floor can become fatigued, but this should settle as the muscles get stronger.

## What are the expected benefits?

The goal is for electrical stimulation to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles, so they are able to contract against gravity. It may take up to 3 months for this to happen and your physiotherapist will assess you during this time to monitor your progress. Once this has been achieved, electrical stimulation is stopped, and a tailored comprehensive exercise programme is started. However, electrical stimulation may not work. If there is no improvement in strength, then the physiotherapist will discuss the next steps in terms of continued exercise or onward referral to another speciality for further review or input.

## Can I use the machine whilst having a period?

Yes, if you feel comfortable doing so. However, if you have period related cramps or pains, electrical stimulation may make them worse.

## When should I not use the machine?

If you have any of the following:

- A pacemaker
- A vaginal infection or a sore vagina
- Diabetes
- Haemophilia
- A history of pelvic cancer
- Reduced skin sensation
- A urinary tract infection
- A current abnormal smear
- A Pessary that you cannot remove.

## How do I use the machine?

- Insert the battery into the machine. Do not leave the battery in the machine for longer than a week at a time without using the machine
- Insert the lead wire into channel A
- Put some lubricating jelly onto the metal parts of the vaginal probe, making sure that the surfaces are completely covered. We use opilube in the clinic.
- Insert the probe into your vagina with the metal parts facing each hip.
- Connect the wires on the vaginal probe to the machine.
- Switch the unit on by pressing the power button on the top of the machine.
- Press the programme button (PRG) and select the programme that you have discussed with your Physiotherapist
- To start the programme, press the + button underneath A on the left side of the PRG button, and keep pressing it until you reach a comfortable intensity, it will be a tingling sensation to start with, then as you increase the intensity you will feel the muscles start to contract.
- When you have learnt what it feels like to contract your pelvic floor muscles, join in with the machine and contract your pelvic floor at the same time
- After use, turn off the machine.
- First, remove the equipment cable and then the probe from your vagina.
- Clean and dry the probe with warm soapy water at the end of each use. Take care not to get the wires wet. Dry the probe and store it safely until your next treatment

### Contact

If you have any queries, do not hesitate to call us on **01225 683007** and you will be directed to your Physiotherapist.  
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