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neurosciencegroup

Your Guide to a Spinal Cord Stimulator Trial (SCS Trial)

What is a SCS Trial?

A Spinal Cord Stimulator Trial is a procedural test in which temporary wires, called leads, are threaded through a needle into the epidural space in the back or neck area. The epidural space is an area located outside of the spinal cord area. The leads are then attached to the stimulator and the stimulator is taped to your skin. This is a 5–7-day trial. At the end of the 5- 7 days, you will have an office visit. An Xray will be performed, and a nurse will remove the temporary leads and stimulator. The provider will review the effectiveness of your trial to determine if you would benefit from a permanent SCS implant.

How can a SCS Trial help me?

A SCS trial helps to determine if a permanent SCS would benefit your long-term pain management. A SCS uses electrical impulses to relieve chronic pain in the arms, back, or legs by preventing pain signals from being received by the brain.

Will I have immediate relief after and during my SCS Trial?

A SCS Trial should improve your neuropathic pain within the first 24 hrs. This may not cover all your symptoms but should make your pain more tolerable and improve your quality of life.

How do I prepare for a SCS Trial?

Ensure your doctor knows if:

You are taking Coumadin or any other blood thinners (including NSAIDS): *Plavix, Aspirin, Eliquis, Excedrin, fish oil, Excedrin, ibuprofen, aspirin, etc.*

You are taking steroids and or antibiotics.

You have liver or kidney disease: *chronic kidney disease, cirrhosis, etc.*

You have the following implantable devices: *medication pump, pacemaker, defibrillator, or stimulator.*

You have an artificial heart valve.

You have any allergies: *steroids, anesthetic, iodine, adhesive, contrast, shellfish.*

You have any questions regarding your medication.

You have a dental procedure or other invasive procedure that is required during the spinal cord stimulator trial.

Please Do NOT schedule dental or other invasive procedures during your spinal cord stimulator trial.

You have had or are planning to have a vaccine within 2 weeks of your procedure.

****Please call to cancel your appointment if you have a fever, the flu, covid, or any other infection****

Questions about your injection procedure? Call Heather, our Physiatry Nurse Navigator, 920-725-9373

What can I do the day of a SCS Trial?

- You will need to shower with antibacterial soap the day before and the day of your procedure.
- You may eat and drink normally; there is no need to fast.
- Take your normal medication on the day of your test, unless otherwise instructed.
- **If you were prescribed an oral antibiotic, you will want to take it the morning of your procedure with a light breakfast.**
- **You will need to arrive at least 1 hour before your scheduled procedure.**
- **Bring someone with you who can remain on campus to drive you home** (the length of the procedure itself is approximately 45 minutes). It is beneficial if your driver is someone who can hear the information about the SCS from the SCS representative with you after the procedure.

What can I expect during the procedure?

If indicated, you will bring your premedication with you and take it AFTER signing your consent form.

You will be asked to change into a gown.

An IV may be placed in your arm prior to the procedure and a prophylactic antibiotic may be administered by the nurse.

The SCS representative will meet with you before your procedure begins to prepare for the procedure, including asking questions regarding the location of your pain.

If an IV antibiotic was needed, once it is completed, you will be assisted into the procedure room.

You will need to be able to get yourself up onto the procedure table and position yourself on your stomach.

You will be on your stomach for the duration of the procedure.

Your back will be cleansed with an antiseptic solution and your skin will be numbed with a local anesthetic.

The physician will use fluoroscopy (x-ray) to guide the placement of the leads into the epidural space of your midback.

Once the leads are in the correct place, they will be attached to the stimulator.

The leads and stimulator will be secured in place and a dressing will be applied.

The procedure is complete.

You will be asked to stand up from the table and then lay down once again to take a final x-ray (picture) to document final position of the electrodes. This will help the representative target your symptoms.

What happens after my SCS Trial procedure?

- You will spend about 20 minutes in the recovery room reviewing post-procedure instructions with the SCS representative prior to discharging. You may require a longer stay in recovery if additional monitoring is necessary.
- You may experience warmth, numbness, tingling, heaviness at the procedure site for up to 6 hours after your procedure.
- Once the anesthetic wears off, you may experience pain at the procedure site.
- You may also see a small amount of blood at the procedure site that is normal. If you see blood oozing from the dressing proceed to the Neuroscience office immediately (within business hours) or to the nearest Emergency Room.
- You will NOT be able to drive or operate heavy machinery for 8 hours after your procedure.
- **You will NOT be able to shower** while the temporary stimulator is in place. SPONGE BATH ONLY. **Do NOT get the stimulator or dressing wet.**
- The dressing needs to remain intact. If the dressing becomes loose, **do NOT remove any loose dressing or tape.** Apply tape over the loose area to secure it back down.
- You will need to refrain from strenuous activity and heavy lifting during the trial.
- You may return to work the following day if sedentary or light duty.
- Avoid heavy lifting, twisting or repetitive bending.
- Hold on physical therapy and or chiropractic care during the trial period.
- **The SCS device will be removed after 5-7 days. YOU WILL NEED A DRIVER for this appt as there is risk of bleeding that could affect the ability to move your legs.**