



## Spinal Cord Stimulation (SCS)

### Patient Information Sheet

#### What is spinal cord stimulation?

Spinal cord stimulation (SCS) is a treatment used to help reduce **chronic pain**, especially pain that has not improved with medications, injections, or surgery.

It works by sending **gentle electrical signals** to the spinal cord. These signals change how pain messages are sent to the brain, which can reduce how much pain you feel.

SCS does **not cure** the cause of pain, but it can help **control pain** and improve daily function and quality of life.

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#### What types of pain can SCS help?

SCS is most often used for:

- Chronic back or leg pain
- Nerve pain (burning, tingling, electric-type pain)
- Pain after spine surgery (sometimes called “failed back surgery syndrome”)
- Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)
- Certain types of peripheral neuropathy

Not everyone is a good candidate. Your pain doctor will help decide if SCS is appropriate for you.

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#### How does spinal cord stimulation work?

- Thin wires called **leads** are placed near the spinal cord
- A small battery (generator) sends electrical signals to the leads
- The signals interfere with pain signals before they reach the brain

- Many patients feel **less pain**, even though the underlying condition remains

Some systems cause a mild tingling sensation, while newer systems may work without you feeling anything at all.

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## **The two-step process**

### **1. Trial phase**

- A temporary system is placed for **5–7 days**
- No permanent implant at this stage
- You test how much pain relief you get
- A successful trial usually means **50% or more pain reduction**

If the trial helps, you may proceed to permanent implantation.

### **2. Permanent implant**

- Leads are implanted near the spine
  - A small battery is placed under the skin (usually in the buttock or abdomen)
  - The system is programmed specifically for you
  - Some batteries are rechargeable, others are not
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## **What are the benefits of SCS?**

- Reduced pain
  - Improved ability to move and function
  - Better sleep
  - Possible reduction in pain medications
  - Adjustable and reversible treatment
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## **What are the risks?**

As with any procedure, there are risks. These include:

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Pain at the implant site
- Lead movement or breakage
- Device malfunction
- Incomplete pain relief
- Need for additional procedures or revisions

Serious complications are uncommon but possible.

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### **What is recovery like?**

- Most patients go home the same day
  - Activity is limited for several weeks to allow healing
  - Avoid heavy lifting, bending, or twisting at first
  - The device can be adjusted over time to improve pain control
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### **Will I still have pain?**

Yes. SCS usually **reduces pain**, but it does not eliminate it completely. The goal is meaningful improvement in pain and function, not a cure.

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### **Is spinal cord stimulation reversible?**

Yes. The system can be turned off or removed if needed.

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### **Is SCS covered by insurance?**

In many cases, yes. Coverage depends on your diagnosis and insurance plan. Your clinic staff can help guide you through this process.


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### **Questions or concerns?**

If you have questions about spinal cord stimulation, please speak with your pain specialist.  
A detailed discussion is important to decide whether this treatment is right for you.

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