

TRANSCUTANEOUS ELECTRICAL NERVE STIMULATION (TENS)

What is TENS?

TENS (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation) is a non-invasive, drug-free method of controlling pain. The MamaTENS unit is specific to labour and consists of a battery-powered stimulator and two pairs of electrodes with connecting leads.

A mild electrical current is produced by the TENS unit which you will feel as a tingling sensation on your skin. The intensity and frequency of the electrical impulses can be adjusted for use as you progress through labour.

How does TENS work?

Pain signals from all parts of the body travel along nerve pathways to the brain via the spinal cord. The brain interprets these signals as pain. TENS stimulates the nerve pathways before they enter the spinal cord thereby blocking some pain messages. The brain registers the TENS sensation rather than pain itself.

Labour pain arises predominantly from the uterine muscle contracting and fatiguing, as well as the cervix dilating. The TENS electrodes are therefore positioned over the nerve pathways which transmit messages to the uterus and cervix (T10 and S2 spinal segmental levels).

TENS also increases the production of endorphins, which raises the pain threshold and increases the feeling of well-being.

Advantages:

- Non-invasive, drug-free method of pain control.
- You have some independence and control over your pain management
- Studies demonstrate no effect on your baby (measured by median Apgar scores)
- It is simple to apply and maintain and is completely reversible
- Does not restrict your ability to move and change positions during labour
- Does not affect your consciousness level
- Can be applied at home during early labour

Disadvantages:

- Reduces area for back rubbing
- Must be removed prior to showering/bathing

Contraindications:

- Do not use if you have metal implants in the area
- Do not use if you have a pacemaker
- Do not use over broken/damaged skin



If you'd like to hire a MamaTENS machine for use during labour you can contact Southcare Physiotherapy on **08 6332 6666**. Please note that this does require an appointment where you will be taught how to use MamaTENS, go over important safety features and have a practice use of the machine.