



Saint Mary's Managed Clinical Service Division of Gynaecology

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

PERCUTANEOUS TIBIAL NERVE STIMULATION (PTNS)

WHAT IS PTNS?

Bladder function is controlled by a group of nerves called the sacral nerve plexus, which also controls the function of the lower end of the bowel (the rectum).

PTNS involves using a thin acupuncture-like needle inserted through the skin above the ankle to stimulate these nerves through gentle electrical impulses (neurostimulation). The neurostimulation results in more functional bladder and/or rectal activity.

PTNS is a safe and well tolerated treatment. The sacral plexus provides nerves from the pelvis and lower limbs. One of these nerves, the pudendal nerve, supplies nerve function to the bladder. The stimulation travels from the tibial nerve point of entry near the ankle, up to the sacral plexus and indirectly to the pudendal nerve. The intense and repeated activation of the pudendal nerve reduces overactive bladder symptoms, if stopped or discontinued the symptoms will come back, this means the need of regular top-ups.

60-90% of patients feel improvement in their symptoms following PTNS treatment.

WHY DO I NEED PTNS?

You have a condition called overactive bladder (OAB). This means you may have some or all of the following:

- Passing urine more frequently than normal.
- Have a strong urge to pass urine that you cannot put off.
- Urinary leakage when you cannot get to the toilet quickly enough.
- Getting up to pass urine more than once through the night.

If other forms of treatment, for example bladder retraining, diet and fluid advice, or medication, have not helped your bladder problem, you may be offered PTNS.

WHAT DOES THE TREATMENT INVOLVE?

PTNS is a 12-week course of treatment with appointments lasting for 30 minutes. You must be able to commit to the full 12-week course, as a break in the treatment will have an impact on the overall results. If the treatment is successful, you will be offered regular top up treatments (usually every 4 weeks) to maintain the reduction in your OAB symptoms.

The treatment does not work immediately, and it can take several weeks before you notice any improvement. It is important that you attend all your appointments without a break if possible.

Before commencing the treatment, you will be contacted by one of the nurse specialists to discuss your symptoms and explain the planned course of treatment in more detail. You will be required to complete a 3-day bladder diary and quality of life questionnaire before you are able to commence the treatment. You will be asked to bring the completed bladder diary and questionnaire with you to your first appointment.

Your progress will be monitored regularly by the specialist nurse throughout your treatment and the bladder diary and questionnaire will be repeated at week 6 and week 12.

Please note that it is vital that you continue with the principles of bladder retraining and fluid modification which will have been discussed with you at previous appointments otherwise the treatment is likely to be successful.

WHAT HAPPENS AT MY APPOINTMENT?

You will be greeted by your nurse and shown into a clinic room. Sessions are often in single sex groups so there may be up to 3 other patients in the room undergoing the same treatment.

You will be seated comfortably in a chair with your leg elevated on a footrest. A very thin needle (like an acupuncture needle) will be gently inserted near your ankle and connected to a battery powered stimulator which delivers a mild electrical current via the needle to the tibial nerve. The treatment can be delivered on either ankle.

Once connected to the stimulator, it will be turned on and tested for a response. You may experience a buzzing, tingling or throbbing sensation or involuntary movement of the toes. This shows us that the nerve is being stimulated correctly. Once we get the correct response the treatment will be commenced and run for 30 minutes. Any sensations you feel initially will reduce over the 30 minutes, however, if you are uncomfortable the current can be turned down. After 30 minutes the treatment ends, and the needle is removed.



HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR MY APPOINTMENT?

- **Please make sure you bring your completed bladder diary and questionnaire if you have been asked to do so.**
- You can eat and drink normally prior to your appointment. It is a good idea to bring a drink with you and something to occupy you such as a book whilst you have your treatment.
- It is a good idea to empty your bladder when you arrive at the clinic as you will not be able to go once you are attached to the simulator.
- If you have any symptoms of urinary tract infection, please bring a urine sample with you so that it can be tested for infection.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AFTER MY APPOINTMENT?

You may experience very minor irritation and/or bleeding where the needle has been inserted and there may be a slight aching around the ankle after the treatment. These symptoms usually go away within a few hours.

Your nurse will monitor your progress throughout the treatment. If the treatment is successful, the nurse will arrange your top up appointments. If the treatment is not successful alternative treatments will be discussed with you.

If you require any further information or clarification, including clarification of terminology, please do not hesitate to talk to one of the doctors or nurses, who will be happy to discuss your concerns with you.

CONTACT DETAILS

Warrell Unit: For appointments 08:30-16:00



(0161) 701 4455 - Choose option 3 "Urogynaecology"

Warrell Unit Nurses: (during office hours only) - (0161) 701 6776 

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