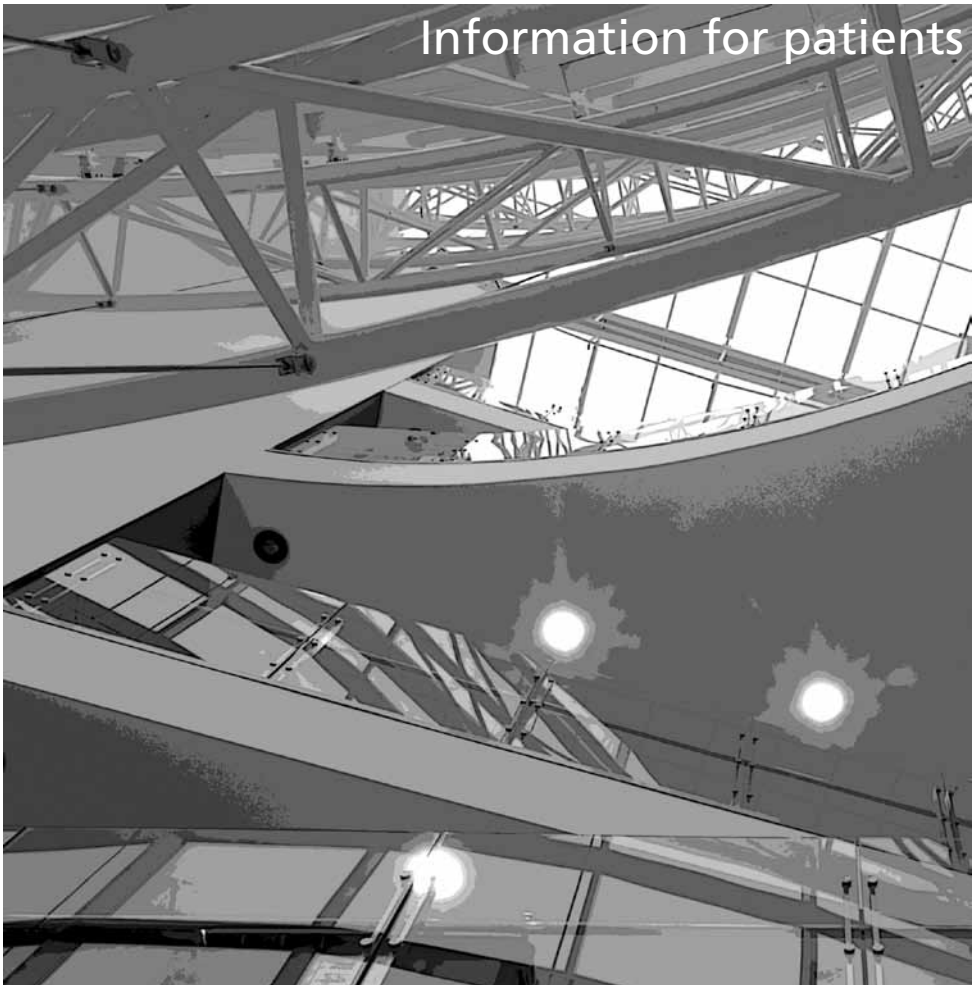


Department of Neurosciences

Discharge advice after implantation of a Spinal Cord Stimulator

Information for patients



Going home

Going home after implantation of a Spinal Cord Stimulator can feel a little worrying. We hope that during your stay with us we have answered many of your questions. This leaflet gives you further support and guidance about your recovery at home.

We feel it is important that you do not feel alone and isolated at home. If you need any advice please contact the Clinical Nurse Specialist in Pain Management (contact numbers are given at the end of the leaflet). Alternatively, staff on the ward and your GP and Practice Nurse are there to help, as are our Service Coordinators.

This leaflet answers the questions most often asked by patients getting ready to go home. If you have any additional questions, please talk to a member of the team or your nurse before you leave hospital.

How soon will I be getting back to normal?

It is normal to feel very tired for the first 4-6 weeks after leaving hospital. When you get home you may feel less tired if you break your day into periods of rest and activity. This may mean having a sleep for a couple of hours in the afternoon or getting up later in the morning.

Avoid excessive bending, twisting, overhead reaching and lifting. You may go on holiday, including flying, as soon as you feel well enough.

As soon as the initial tiredness passes you can look forward to becoming more active.

What about work?

How quickly you return to work largely depends on what type of work you do. You may wish to discuss this with your Doctor before you go home. Generally you are the best person to decide how well you feel and your limitations. A period of 6-8 weeks off work is not unusual. We can provide a sickness certificate for your stay in hospital and after that your GP can provide further certificates as necessary.

Will my medication be changed?

You will probably need to continue taking painkillers, at least in the first few weeks while we are adjusting your stimulator to get the best pain relief that we can. You may always need to take some medication to help with the pain relief. If you are unsure about the medication you should be taking, please discuss this with us before you leave the ward. Once you get home, if you experience any symptoms which are unusual for you, please consult your GP, the ward or the Clinical Nurse Specialist in Pain Management.

How do I look after my wound?

Your stitches will need to be removed at your GP's surgery by the nurse. We will give you the date for this and a letter for the nurse. If you have steristrips instead of stitches we will give you instructions on how and when to remove them. The dressings will have already been removed and another is not needed.

Signs to look out for

Inspect your wounds daily with the aid of a mirror. If you notice any of the signs listed below, please contact your GP:

- any leakage from the wound, this may be brown, green, or clear
- any redness or swelling at the wound site or around it
- pain around the wound.

About the stimulator

We will give you a booklet that is written by the company who make your stimulator. Please read it and if there is anything that is not clear, do not hesitate to ask your nurse or one of the team. You should also be given an ID card giving details of your stimulator. If you have not been given either the information booklet or the ID card, please ask a member of the ward staff to contact the Clinical Nurse Specialist in Pain Management.

The stimulator may be switched on or off by strong magnetic fields such as those found on some security door systems and at airport security. If you see a sign warning people with heart pacemakers to report to staff, this will also apply to you.

There are a number of medical treatments that should be avoided with your stimulator. For example: electrosurgery, diathermy (heat treatment), lithotripsy (treatment for renal

stones), radiation therapy and MRI scans. Details are in the information booklet we have given to you.

You may need to return to the hospital several times for adjustment of the settings of your stimulator. If you are unhappy with the pain relief you are getting, please phone the Nurse Specialist or your Consultant's Service Coordinator and they will arrange a time for you to come back for review.

When will I be able to resume sexual activity?

The simple answer is whenever you feel ready. If you are taking any tablets it is important you see your GP before becoming pregnant as certain medications may affect your growing baby. The oral contraceptive pill may be less effective if you are taking certain tablets as well so we advise you to see your GP.

Adverse symptoms

You have already made a good recovery and we are confident this will continue at home. However, in the unlikely event of any of the following symptoms occurring, please see your GP or telephone the ward for advice and help:

- any fever or high temperature
- any numbness or pins and needles that you did not have before the surgery
- difficulty walking or moving
- difficulty in passing urine
- difficulty swallowing food or liquids
- any incontinence of urine/faeces
- a cough / coughing up sputum
- tiredness that lasts for more than about 3 weeks.

Driving

Do not drive until we have seen you for your post-implant review 4-6 weeks after you go home. Further information can be obtained from the DVLA.

Going home checklist

- Tablets and explanation documents
- ID card and SCS Information.
- Transport arrangements
- Your belongings
- Any valuables locked away
- Letter for your GP and Practice Nurse

We will make an appointment for you to return to the hospital outpatients department. We will send this to you at home or give it to you before you go home. If you have not received anything in 4 weeks please contact the Service Coordinator.

Further Information / how to contact us

With either the Medtronic or the St Jude ANS system we will give you a programmer to control your SCS. Whilst we can cover costs for malfunction of the equipment, unfortunately we cannot cover costs of accidental damage or loss. We currently advise patients to put the programmer onto their home insurance policies. Failure to do so may lead to a delay in the replacement of the device. If you have any questions you would like to ask, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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Consultant Neurosurgeons

Service Coordinator – Joanne Lavender

Tel: 01865 234605

Ward Number

Tel: 01865 234912 or 231526

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk**

Liz Moir, Clinical Nurse Specialist
Miss S Bojanic, Professor T Aziz & Mr A Green, Consultant Neurosurgeons
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