Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) versus placebo for chronic low-back pain (2008)

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Overview of the study

Objectives

• To determine whether TENS is more effective than placebo for the management of chronic LBP

Methods

• Evidence current up to 19 July 2007
• Participants: Adults (>=18 years) with chronic LBP
• Intervention: Standard modes of TENS
• Outcomes measured
  - Primary outcomes: pain, back-specific functional status, generic health status, work disability, patient satisfaction, treatment side effects
  - Secondary outcomes: physical examination measures (e.g. range of motion, finger-to-floor distance, degree of straight leg raising etc.)
Results & Conclusion

• Five trials (585 participants) included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Evidence/ Quality of evidence*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TENS</strong></td>
<td>Moderate evidence shows that work status and the use of medical services did not change with treatment</td>
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<td>Conflicting evidence on the effects of TENS in reducing back pain intensity</td>
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<td>Consistent evidence that TENS did not improve back-specific functional status</td>
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<td>Conflicting evidence on the effects of TENS on generic health</td>
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⇒ Current evidence does not support the effects of TENS in the routine management of chronic LBP

* The GRADE approach was not used to assess quality of evidence.