

Frequently asked questions

Is TMS the same as ECT?

No, TMS is not Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT). ECT is a different treatment used for severe depression and involves the use of electricity to produce a well-modified seizure. An Anaesthetic is required for ECT. TMS does not require an anaesthetic and does not involve producing a seizure.

Will TMS affect my memory?

TMS does not lead to memory difficulties. You may notice an improvement as your mood improves.

Will TMS affect my hair or scalp?

TMS does not damage your scalp or hair.

Are there any immediate effects to TMS?

Some people feel tired after each TMS treatment though this differs from person to person. Some people report an improvement in their night sleep during the treatment course.

Do I need to be in hospital to have TMS?

No, TMS is offered as both an outpatient or inpatient service. A health fund check will be completed to check your eligibility for treatment as an inpatient. Outpatient treatment is available as a self-funded option.

Enquires are welcome and treated confidentially.



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Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS)



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What is Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS)?

TMS is a relatively new technology which is showing substantial promise as a therapy for a range of conditions.

TMS is a non-invasive treatment which works by using a magnetic field to stimulate nerve cells in superficial areas of the brain. A hand-held, plastic-coated coil is placed on the scalp of the person receiving TMS treatment. Electrical current passes through the coil, creating a magnetic field that stimulates electrical activity in the nerve tissue below the coil.

When TMS is administered repeatedly over an extended period, it can be used to either increase or decrease activity in certain parts of the brain that are either underactive or overactive, such as depression or auditory hallucinations.

TMS is a non-invasive therapy that is carried out while the person receiving it is awake and alert. As such, it has important advantages over other therapies. These include:

- Low risk of side-effects or serious complications
- Avoidance of the need of anaesthesia
- Reduced costs and inconvenience to the patient
- Suitable for use in medically unwell people who may not be able to tolerate certain medications or Electroconvulsive Therapy.

What is Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation used for?

TMS is used to treat a range of disorders. At Berkeley Vale Clinic, we deliver courses of TMS to treat Major Depressive Disorder. In treating depression, the aim of the TMS is to lift a patient's mood. With an improvement in mood there is often an associated improvement in sleep, appetite, energy and concentration and a decrease in negative thoughts. TMS has a good response rate, however some patients may require ongoing treatment from their psychiatrist to maintain a response.

Who can have Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation?

To receive TMS a patient will require a referral to Berkeley Vale Clinic by a psychiatrist with admitting privileges to Berkeley Private Hospital. TMS is available for patients with depression and a history of poor response to, or an inability to tolerate the side effects of medications. It is also available to patients who have had a previous good response to TMS at other facilities.

As TMS involves magnetic energy, there are some people who are unable to have TMS. Exclusion to TMS include:

- Cardiac Pacemakers / Defibrillators
- Previous Head / Brain Surgery
- Cochlear Implants
- Brain Aneurysm Clips
- Previous Seizures / Fits / Epilepsy
- Neurostimulator / Biostimulator
- Significant Neurological Disorder (MS, Cerebral Lupus, Brain Tumour, etc.)

The referring psychiatrist will be asked to complete and sign a rTMS Adult Safety Screen Form prior to the patient receiving TMS. People with dental fillings/braces can receive TMS.

What happens whilst receiving Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation?

Once a referral form is received, a patient will be contacted and booked in for an assessment, the psychiatrist will confirm the patient's suitability and take the necessary measurements to determine the treatment area and intensity. Following this, a patient will then be booked in to begin a course of treatment.

A course of treatment with TMS involves repeated sessions over a number of consecutive weeks. During each treatment session patients are seated in a comfortable chair. They are fully conscious and responsive, and there are no medications involved in the treatment. The TMS operator rests the coil on the appropriate area of the scalp before then activating it. Whilst having treatment, a patient may talk with the operator, rest, or relax as they see fit.

Patients will need to remove any metal hair clips. For ease of treatment it is preferable that a patient does not have gel, mousse or other products in their hair. Hearing aids, glasses, earrings and studs are removed during the treatment.

What side effects may occur with Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation?

Some patients may experience mild localised discomfort over the site of the stimulation due to the effect of the pulsing magnet. During the treatment the pulsing magnet produces a "tapping" sensation on the skin and some patients may experience a mild headache following some treatment. This settles with time or with simple analgesia (e.g. Panadol). Disposable earplugs are made available.