

PTNS - Percutaneous Tibial Nerve Stimulation

A treatment to help with
overactive bladder symptoms

Patient Information

Women & Children
Obstetrics & Gynaecology

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Why do I need PTNS?

PTNS is a treatment for overactive bladder (OAB); you have been offered PTNS treatment because your OAB has not responded to lifestyle changes or medication.

What lifestyle changes should I have tried before trying PTNS?

Before trying PTNS you should have tried to cut out caffeine from your diet and limited yourself to drinking a minimum of one and a half litres (three pints) to a maximum of two litres (four pints) of decaffeinated fluids per day. You should aim to sip fluids throughout the day rather than drinking large amounts of fluid in one sitting and some people find it beneficial to restrict fluids after teatime as this helps reduce the number of times you need to wake through the night to pass urine. You should also be continuing on with any bladder retraining or pelvic floor exercises you have been shown by the continence advisor or physiotherapist. Making these changes to your lifestyle will help your OAB symptoms, these changes need to be made before trying PTNS, to give the treatment the best chance of working.

What about medication?

PTNS and other invasive treatment for OAB will usually be offered after you have tried three different medications to manage your OAB symptoms. If the medications are ineffective, you have bad side effects from them or your doctor says you cannot take them then you will be offered alternative treatment. The medication is tried before these other treatments as it is simple to administer and effective for up to sixty percent of people with OAB. Medications you may try are: Oxybutanin, Tolterodine, Solifenacin, Fesoterodine, Darifenacin, Trospium or Mirabegron. If you haven't tried these medications ask your consultant or GP if you should try these before starting your PTNS treatment.

Will my OAB be cured?

There is currently no known cure for OAB. We know that making lifestyle changes and taking medication makes the OAB symptoms less troublesome but we don't know how to cure OAB symptoms. All of the treatments you could be offered for OAB aim to improve things but cannot promise a cure. Some treatments are more risky than others and some involve surgery. Your specialist will discuss the treatment options that are suitable for you and it will be your decision if you want to have any further treatments.

How effective is PTNS?

There isn't a lot of evidence to say how effective PTNS is, there is a special leaflet produced by the national institute for clinical excellence (NICE) that explains about treatment effectiveness. You should read this leaflet before making your decision to start the PTNS treatment. The online link to this leaflet is: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg362/resources/treating-an-overactive-bladder-by-stimulating-a-nerve-near-the-ankle-pdf-315919405>

At South-Tees hospitals our most recent audit showed seventeen out of twenty eight patients treated with PTNS found their OAB symptoms were at least fifty percent improved after having twelve weekly treatments. For some patients the improvement was very good for others it was only slightly improved meaning they may still have incontinence or go to the toilet too often but it was less troublesome after the treatment. For the other eleven people their symptoms weren't improved enough to continue the treatment so they were referred back to see the consultant to discuss alternatives.

Is PTNS safe and does it hurt?

PTNS is a very safe treatment the most common side effects from the treatment are aching in the legs, bruising at the needle insertion site, some fluid seepage from the needle site or that the treatment doesn't improve your symptoms. NICE have seen rare reports of the following side effects but these have not been seen at our treatment centre, worsening incontinence, headache, blood in the urine and dizziness or fainting in response to the needle being inserted.

What does the treatment involve?

You will have to complete a bladder diary and a computer questionnaire to assess your symptoms before you start your treatment, this will be sent with your first appointment. Please complete this before you come to the clinic.

You will have an acupuncture needle inserted to your ankle, which should not be painful, then a stimulator box will be attached to the needle and a sticky pad is put on the sole of your foot. The stimulation will be slowly increased until you feel a tingling sensation in your foot once the tingling is quite strong the treatment is commenced and will last for thirty minutes. At the end of the treatment the needle is removed and you are free to leave the clinic. There are generally no after effects of the treatment and you will be given an appointment to return in a week for your next session.

You need to have a treatment every week for twelve weeks. You will not notice any improvement in your symptoms until you have had around ten of the twelve treatments so please be patient and attend each week. At the twelfth week you will be given another bladder diary and computer questionnaire to complete and asked to return in two weeks for your assessment.

If the treatment has made a significant reduction in your symptoms (at least halved) then you will continue on the treatment. You will have a treatment that day and another in a fortnight then you will be given one treatment a month, every month to keep your symptoms stable.

What if I can't make my appointment?

To give the treatment the best chance of working you need to have a treatment each week. If you are too poorly to attend or you have to cancel your appointment, please ring us to let us know you can't come and we will try to rearrange the appointment. If you miss more than one treatment in a row it is unlikely that the treatment will be effective so please do your best to attend and ensure you don't start the treatment if you are planning to be away during the next twelve weeks. If you need to contact us regarding your appointment the contact numbers are at the end of this leaflet.

Is PTNS the right treatment for me?

If you cannot easily attend the hospital for appointments then PTNS may not be suitable for you as you are required to attend every week for twelve weeks and if the treatment is effective you will have to come for a "top up" treatment roughly once a month on a long-term basis to keep your symptoms controlled. Otherwise PTNS is a very safe and effective treatment. We do not fully understand how the PTNS works and for that reason we do not know who will respond to PTNS and who won't. You may come for twelve treatments and at the end your symptoms may not improve. As long as you are willing to accept this, then a trial of treatment can be undertaken.

What if I don't want PTNS?

If you don't want PTNS treatment there are alternatives. You could use the medication that improved your symptoms the most or you may be offered a surgical procedure if your consultant feels this is appropriate for you. The other procedures for OAB are botox to the bladder or sacral nerve stimulation; however these treatments are not suitable for everyone. If your consultant offers you these procedures there are separate information leaflets available on our patient information website.

If you have any questions regarding PTNS please write them here and ask your specialist at your next appointment.

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Contact numbers

Gynaecology outpatients:

Friarage: 01609 764814

The James Cook University Hospital: 01642 854243

Comments, compliments, concerns or complaints

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is concerned about the quality of care you receive and strives to maintain high standards of health care.

However we do appreciate that there may be an occasion where you, or your family, feel dissatisfied with the standard of service you receive. Please do not hesitate to tell us about your concerns as this helps us to learn from your experience and to improve services for future patients.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

This service aims to advise and support patients, families and carers and help sort out problems quickly on your behalf.

This service is available, and based, at The James Cook University Hospital but also covers the Friarage Hospital in Northallerton, our community hospitals and community health services. Please ask a member of staff for further information.

If you require this information in a different format please contact Freephone 0800 0282451

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