

Medical Aid Position Statement

Date:	May 2017
Medical Aid Type:	Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) for chronic low back pain
Position:	Not Funded
Reviewed By:	Dr. Paul Eagan- CMO

Rationale: A systematic review (Khadilkar, Odebiyi, Brosseau, & Wells, 2008) examined four high-quality randomized controlled trials which compared TENS with placebo for chronic low-back pain. There was conflicting evidence that TENS is beneficial in reducing the intensity of back pain. There was consistent evidence in two trials that TENS did not improve the level of disability due to back pain. There was moderate evidence that use of medical services and work status (e.g. loss of work, sick days) did not change during treatment. There was no difference between conventional and acupuncture-like TENS.

The authors concluded that given the conflicting evidence regarding the benefits of TENS for chronic low back pain, there is no support for the use of TENS in the routine management of chronic low back pain.

References

Khadilkar A, Odebiyi DO, Brosseau L, Wells GA. Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) versus placebo for chronic low-back pain. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2008, Issue 4. Art. No.: CD003008. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD003008.pub3