

**Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulators (TENS) Guidelines****DEPARTMENT: Utilization Management Physician Practice Guidelines****EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/06****DATE LAST REVIEWED: 01/21****SOURCES:** DeSantana et al., Carr Rheumatol Rep 2008, 10:492-9  
Dubinsky and Miyasaki, Neurology 2010, 74:173-6  
American Academy of Pain Medicine, Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines 2007**RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES:**

- 1) A TENS unit is a device which utilizes electrical current delivered through electrodes placed on the surface of the skin over the peripheral nerve to be stimulated.
- 2) The TENS unit decreases a patient's perception of pain by inhibiting the transmission of afferent pain nerve impulses and/or stimulating release of endorphins.
- 3) All TENS unit requests require prior authorization to establish medical necessity, assess for case management intervention and assure utilization of network providers when available.
- 4) Indications for a TENS unit, at least one of the following:
  - a) Chronic intractable pain associated with a neuropathy or radiculopathy
  - b) Documented failure to control chronic intractable pain with other conservative measures.
  - c) Acute postoperative pain limited to 30 days from the day of surgery.
  - d) Dysmenorrhea
- 5) Examples of conditions for which a TENS unit is not considered medically necessary are (not all-inclusive) as follows:
  - a) Headache, except migraines
  - b) Visceral abdominal pain
  - c) Pelvic pain, except dysmenorrhea
  - d) Temporomandibular pain (TMJ)
  - e) Osteoarthritis of the knee
- 6) Rental of a TENS unit is appropriate for no less than 30 days and not to exceed 60 days.
- 7) Purchase will be determined upon receipt from the ordering physician:
  - a) Documentation that the patient will likely derive significant therapeutic benefit from continuous use of the unit over a long period of time.
  - b) Following a rental period of no less than 30 days.
  - c) Documentation of patient compliance.