

Vagus nerve stimulation

What you need to know



Information for patients
Neurology



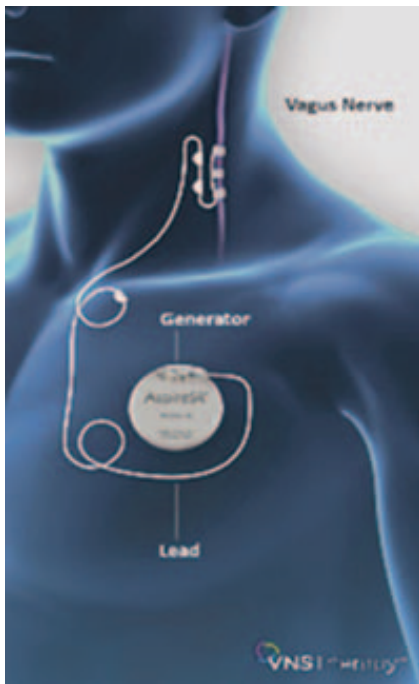
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What is a Vagus Nerve Stimulator?

A Vagus Nerve Stimulator (VNS) is a device which can reduce the severity or frequency of epileptic seizures. It consists of a small machine which produces electrical signals and an attached wire. The device and wire are placed under the skin in an operation.

How does it work?



- VNS therapy is delivered through a device (generator and lead) that sends mild pulses through the Vagus nerve to areas of the brain associated with seizures.
- It delivers these periodic pulses all day, every day in an effort to control your seizures.
- VNS therapy provides treatment automatically.

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What does the procedure involve?

A small device (generator and lead) is implanted under the skin during a short surgical procedure. The procedure usually takes about an hour and most people go home the same day.

The operation involves a small incision in the neck and upper chest area (normally on your left side).

VNS therapy is not brain surgery.

What are the benefits of a VNS?

A VNS should help to control your seizures, in particular:

- Fewer seizures
- Shorter seizures
- Faster recovery from seizures
- Decreased seizure severity
- Possible fewer medications
- Improved alertness, mood and memory
- Improved quality of life

Are there any risks or side effects?

Possible risks and side effects after surgery may include:

- A hoarseness or change in voice tone
- Shortness of breath
- Coughing
- Sore throat
- Prickling feeling under the skin

The surgeon will explain these possible side effects in more detail. Some side effects are only evident on stimulation of the device. Side effects may be managed by altering the VNS stimulator settings.

Additional therapy

If you have a breakthrough seizure with VNS therapy, an additional dose of therapy may stop or shorten your seizure, decrease its intensity and shorten your recovery time. This can be given by using the magnet to swipe across your chest where the device is situated. If you are unable to do this, a family member, friend or carer can also use the magnet.

Will I need any follow up appointments?

After the procedure you will be required to attend appointments at the hospital to increase the level of stimulation. This may be as frequent as every two weeks for the first 2-3 months. After this, appointments are usually offered every 3-6months.

How long does the battery last?

The battery of the VNS device should last approximately 5-8 years; it will then need to be replaced. This is usually done under local anaesthetic, and is only a short procedure.

When can I go back to work?

It is usually safe to return to work 2-3 weeks after the procedure, depending on the type of work you do.

Can I stop taking my epilepsy medication after the operation?

You must continue with your usual anti-epileptic medication and rescue medication unless instructed otherwise by your consultant.

Is there anything I need to be aware of with a VNS?

If you undergo any medical investigations you should inform medical staff that you have a VNS.

An MRI scan can be safely performed; however special equipment, precautions and procedures must be used.

Useful contacts

VNS Nurse

Royal Hallamshire Hospital
Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

0114 226 8844 (Bleep 017)

LIVANOVA Europe

00 322 720 9593

www.vnstherapy.com

Epilepsy Action

0808 800 5050

www.epilepsy.org.uk

Epilepsy Society

01494 601 400

www.epilepsysociety.org.uk

FABLE (for a better life with epilepsy)

0114 268 4977



www.neurocare.org.uk

0114 267 6464

appeals@neurocare.org.uk



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