



### What are some of the symptoms of arthritis?

Joint pain, tenderness, stiffness, swelling, creaking, grating and locking of joints. Arthritis often causes cartilage damage and cartilage loss in joints. Arthritis pain can interfere with daily tasks.

### What is the goal of treatment for arthritis pain?

While there is no cure for arthritis, taking steps to actively manage your arthritis may help you gain control of your pain and help keep your joints moving.

### Why is electrical stimulation used to treat arthritis?

Unlike some electrical stimulation devices which are used to block pain, electrical stimulation devices used to treat arthritis are intended to stimulate the regrowth of cartilage in damaged joints.

### How do these devices work?

A take-home battery-powered device delivers small electrical currents to the area to be treated. The device is held in place with a lightweight, flexible wrap and Velcro fasteners. The manufacturer recommends eight to ten hours each day for four to six months.

### How do you decide where to put the device?

The BioniCare Stimulator is currently the only device that is FDA-approved for marketing and it is for use on knees or hands.

### How well does electrical stimulation work?

We do not know. This treatment has not been studied enough in humans to know whether it is safe and effective.

### Have these devices been studied?

Yes, but the studies have not been reliable, so we don't know whether the devices really work.

### Is electrical stimulation for the treatment of arthritis covered by Regence?

No. It has not been proven that electrical stimulation can repair damaged cartilage, reduce pain or other arthritis symptoms, or improve movement. It is considered "investigational" and is not covered. You can find more information in the Regence Medical Policy, located at: <http://blue.regence.com/trgmedpol/dme/dme70.html>.

### What else can help arthritis pain?

Talk to your doctor about your treatment options. Symptoms may be helped by one or more of the following:

- Physical therapy or regular gentle exercise such as walking, swimming or biking can help maintain mobility.
- Heat can relieve stiffness.
- Cold can reduce pain and swelling.
- Classes for dealing with chronic pain, over-the-counter pain creams and medications, prescription medication and braces or shoe inserts can help with pain management.
- Weight loss can also help by decreasing stress on joints, particularly the knee.

### **What about surgery?**

If you are not able to go about your daily tasks because of your arthritis, talk to your doctor to see if other options might be right for you. Other options may include surgery, such as joint replacement or another bone or joint procedure.

### **THE BOTTOM LINE**

Electrical stimulation for the treatment of arthritis is an investigational treatment that is still being studied. More study is needed to determine its safety and effectiveness.

*Note: Regence physicians, nurses and pharmacists developed this summary to provide you with information about potential advantages and lack of advantages of electrical stimulation for the treatment of arthritis. This summary was developed based upon an evaluation of information from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), scientific studies and input from practicing doctors and specialists.*