

ConsumerTxSM

Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation



What is Transcranial magnetic stimulation?

Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) is an investigational procedure that uses magnetic fields to stimulate the brain. In this procedure, a small electromagnetic coil is placed against the scalp producing a magnetic field that passes through the brain. The electromagnet creates electric currents that stimulate nerve cells in the region of the brain involved in mood regulation and depression.

What is it being studied for?

There have been many studies using TMS to treat a variety of neurological and psychiatric conditions, like depression, schizophrenia, obsessive compulsive disorder, bulimia nervosa, spasticity, tinnitus, stroke rehabilitation, migraine, fibromyalgia and pain after spinal cord injury. Depression is the most commonly studied condition.

Is TMS approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)?

Yes. The NeuroStar[®] TMS Therapy System received FDA approval in 2008 for the treatment of depression. However, the FDA did not require evidence that the device worked for treating depression.

Is TMS effective?

There are no published studies showing lasting health benefits from TMS or that it can replace other treatments.

Is TMS similar to electroconvulsive therapy?

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is a procedure in which medically trained staff, send electric currents to the brain, while the patient is under sedation or anesthesia. The electric current causes a short seizure that can improve or stop depression. This procedure is controversial but studies have shown that ECT works for depression in many patients who are not responsive to treatment with medication.

Studies have not shown that TMS is as effective or better than ECT for the treatment of depression.

Is TMS covered by Regence?

No. TMS has not been proven to be effective, so it is considered “investigational” and is not covered. You can find more information in the Regence Medical Policy at:

<http://blue.regence.com/trgmedpol/mentalHealth/mh17.html>.

What are the potential risks with a TMS procedure?

Seizures, pain, headache, muscle twitching, eye ache, toothache and stress.

What are other options for treating severe depression?

Depression is usually a very treatable condition. Often, treatment with antidepressant medications, psychotherapy, bright light therapy, hospitalization, or electroconvulsive therapy can help improve even severe cases of depression.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Transcranial magnetic stimulation is an investigational procedure that is still being studied. At this time your best options for treating severe depression are medication, psychotherapy, bright light therapy, hospitalization, or electroconvulsive therapy.

Note: Regence physicians, nurses and pharmacists developed this summary to provide you with information about potential advantages and lack of advantages of transcranial magnetic stimulation. 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.