Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS)
Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS)

What is rTMS?
Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS) is a type of brain stimulation therapy used for symptoms of depression. rTMS is often used for patients who have not had good results with medication.

How does rTMS work?
rTMS therapy sends short pulses of magnetic energy to the brain to stimulate nerve cells. The energy goes to the brain structures that control mood. Only a small part of the brain is affected. There is little effect on the rest of the brain tissue.

What are the possible side effects of rTMS?
- For most patients, there are no serious risks.
- There is a small risk of seizures. The risk is higher for people with epilepsy or who take more than 300 mg per day of buproprion (Welbutrin®).
• Other possible side effects include:
  › Eye blinking or contraction (squeezing) of face muscles during stimulation that you can’t control. These don’t hurt and stop when the stimulation ends.
  › Mild headache, shoulder stiffness, tiredness. These usually go away within 24 hours. You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and/or ibuprofen (Advil®) if needed.

What are your questions?
Please ask. We are here to help you.

Where do I go for my rTMS treatments?
• rTMS treatments are done Monday to Friday from 9:30-11:30 a.m.

• The rTMS clinic is on the main floor of the Mount Hope building at the Nova Scotia Hospital (NSH) site.

• Please arrive 15 minutes before your appointment time and register at the Outpatient Clinic, Room 1137. Clinic staff will take you to the rTMS treatment area when it is time for your appointment.
Where can I park?

- There is metered parking in front of and next to the Mount Hope building for $1 per hour.
- There is a pay parking lot beside the Purdy building at the south end of the NSH site. You can pay using cash or credit cards.
- You can buy a day pass for other non-metered parking areas at the NSH site for $5. See the parking attendant in the Hugh Bell building for a day pass, and make sure to put it on the dashboard of your car.

How do I get ready for my treatments?

- At your first appointment, you will meet with a rTMS psychiatrist and a nurse. Together, you will decide if rTMS is right for you.
- If you decide to go ahead with rTMS, the psychiatrist will ask you to sign a consent form.
- The rTMS team will decide on the proper placement and strength of stimulation for your treatments.
- You may have to adjust or stop some medications, such as benzodiazepines (e.g., lorazepam, Ativan®) or neuropathic agents (e.g., gabapentin, pregabalin), as they can have a negative effect on your treatment. The psychiatrist will tell you if any changes to your medications are needed.
The rTMS nurse will ask you to fill out a few short questionnaires. Your answers will help the team monitor your symptoms of depression. You will need to fill out these questionnaires each week when you come for treatment.

We will call you with your first treatment appointment date and time, and any other instructions.

If you need to cancel an appointment, please call the clinic at least 48 hours before your appointment time.

Please note that missing appointments may affect how successful your rTMS treatments are.

If you miss more than 2 appointments in the same week, we will put your treatments on hold and reassess your treatment plan.

What will happen during the treatment?

During the treatment, you will sit comfortably in a chair. You will be awake during the treatment.

No additional medication is needed for the treatment.
• Your appointment will last for 15-45 minutes, depending on your treatment.
• The nurse will place the rTMS device against your head. You must keep your head still during the treatment so the device stays in place.
• When the treatment starts, you will feel short bursts of stimulation on your scalp followed by short pauses. Many patients describe the feeling as similar to static electricity. The feeling is usually most intense during the first few sessions and gradually lessens over time as the nerves around the site adapt.
• You will have between 20-30 treatments over 4-6 weeks.

Can I do all of my usual activities after an rTMS treatment?
• Yes, you can go back to your usual activities right after each treatment. It is OK to drive after your rTMS treatment.
• We recommend bringing a support person to the first few sessions to help you as you get used to the treatments.
What will happen when I finish my treatments?

• The rTMS service does not offer long-term psychiatric care, therapy, or medication management.

• Once you have finished your rTMS treatments, you will need to see your primary health care provider or psychiatrist for further followup.

Contact

• If you need to contact the rTMS clinic for any reason, please call 902-464-3310 between 9:30-11:30 a.m.

• If no one is available to answer your call, please leave a message. Messages will be returned between 9:30-11:30 a.m.

This pamphlet is just a guide. If you have questions, please talk to your health care provider. We are here to help you.
If you have any of the following symptoms:
› suicidal thoughts
› self-harming thoughts or behaviours
› overwhelming anxiety
› psychotic or distorted thinking
› depression
› trouble with substance use
› any other self-identified mental health concerns

Call the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team at 902-429-8167 or 1-888-429-8167 (toll-free) or go to the nearest Emergency Department. Do not call the clinic, as we may not be able to respond right away.

Nova Scotia Health Authority promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.
Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!
www.nshealth.ca

Prepared by: rTMS Department, Nova Scotia Hospital site
Designed by: NSHA Library Services

The information in this brochure is for informational and educational purposes only. The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

WM85-1975 © June 2019 Nova Scotia Health Authority
The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.