



Patient & Family Guide  
2022

# Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS)

Valley Regional Hospital



[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS)

## What is rTMS?

Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS) is a type of brain stimulation therapy used to treat 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 of side effects.
- There is a small risk of seizures (movements that you cannot control). The risk is higher for people with epilepsy or who take more than 300 mg per day of bupropion (Wellbutrin®).

Other possible side effects include:

- › Eye blinking or contraction (squeezing) of face muscles that you cannot control during the stimulation. These do not hurt and stop when the stimulation ends.
- › Mild headache, shoulder stiffness, tiredness. These usually go away within 24 hours (1 day). You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and/or ibuprofen (Advil®) if needed.

## **Where do I go for my rTMS treatments?**

- The rTMS treatments are done in the Neuromodulation Clinic at the Valley Regional Hospital.
- rTMS treatments are done Monday to Friday between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.
- **Please arrive 15 minutes before your appointment time** and register at the Neuromodulation Clinic reception area.

## **Where can I park?**

- Parking is available at the Valley Regional Hospital for a flat rate of \$3. You must pay for parking in cash when you leave the parking lot. Please make sure you have the correct change before leaving the hospital. Change machines and an ATM are located in the lobby.

- If you have any concerns about paying for your parking, talk with your rTMS team. They may be able to arrange for help.

## **How do I get ready for my treatments?**

- If your health care team decides you may benefit from rTMS, an appointment at the Neuromodulation Clinic will be made for you. We will call you with your first treatment appointment date and time, and any other instructions.
- At your first appointment, you will meet with an 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 review and sign a consent form.
- The rTMS team will decide on the placement and strength of stimulation for your treatments.
- You may have to adjust or stop some medications, such as benzodiazepines (like lorazepam [Ativan®]) or neuropathic agents (like gabapentin, pregabalin), as they can have a negative effect on your treatment. The psychiatrist will work with your primary health care provider and will tell you if you need to change your medications.

- 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 must fill out these questionnaires every week while you are coming for treatment.

**If you need to cancel an appointment, please call the Clinic at 902-679-2657, ext. 3713 at least 48 hours (2 days) before your appointment time.**

## **What will happen during the treatment?**

- During the treatment, you will sit comfortably in a chair. You will be awake during the treatment.
- You do not need any additional medication for the treatment.
- Your appointment may last for up to 1 hour, 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 say it feels like static electricity. The feeling is usually strongest during the first few sessions and gets weaker over time as the nerves around the site adapt.
- You will have between 20 and 30 treatments over 4 to 6 weeks.

- **Please note that any appointments you miss 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.**

## **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 that you bring 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 follow-up.

### **If you have any of the following symptoms:**

- › Thoughts of ending your life
  - › Harming yourself or thoughts of harming yourself
  - › Anxiety that impacts your daily activities
  - › Psychotic or distorted thinking (believing thoughts that are not real or based in reality)
  - › Depression
  - › More alcohol or drug use than usual
  - › Any other mental health changes you notice in yourself
- **Call the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line:**
    - › **Phone (toll-free): 1-888-429-8167**
- OR**
- **Go to the nearest Emergency Department.**

**Do not call the Clinic, as we may not be able to respond right away.**

# Notes:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <https://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

*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](http://www.nshealth.ca)

*Prepared by:* Neuromodulation Services, Valley Regional Hospital

*Designed by:* Nova Scotia Health 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.

WM85-2280 © March 2022 Nova Scotia Health Authority

The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.