

ELECTRICAL STIMULATION THERAPY (ESTIM): FAQs

What is Electrical stimulation therapy (ESTIM)?

- ❑ Is an adjunctive therapy that speeds closure of all types of chronic wounds, including pressure ulcers. Application of ESTIM involves placing specialized electrodes in the wounded area through which electrical current is delivered at a level that produces a pins and needles sensation.
- ❑ Treatments are applied at the time of each dressing change using a portable device that is programmed to work for at least 1 hour per day.

How does ESTIM work?

- ❑ Electrical currents applied to the wound site re-activates many different wound healing processes. The electrical signal also has been shown to kill bacteria found in most wounds and it improves blood flow and increases oxygen levels in and around the wound.

Is using ESTIM considered Best Practice or Experimental?

- ❑ ESTIM has been around for a long time and many research reports have shown when ESTIM is added to standard wound care, it can speed healing and increases the likelihood of complete closure of pressure ulcers, diabetic foot ulcers and leg ulcers due to poor circulation (venous and/or arterial insufficiency).
- ❑ Recently updated RNAO Best Practice Guidelines have concluded that ESTIM has the highest level of evidence (Level 1a) that it works on Stage II, III, IV Pressure Ulcers that were not healing at an expected rate. No other advanced therapy was assigned such a high strength of evidence.
- ❑ A pragmatic controlled clinical trial conducted within SW Ontario region reported that clients with SCI treated with ESTIM had an average of 75% wound closure in 3 months (one quarter original size) with 70% of wounds treated reaching complete wound closure. The average time it took to heal these wounds was 120 days.

Can SW-LHIN clients receiving community care get ESTIM?

- ❑ ESTIM has been available through SW LHIN since 2001. Equipment can be rented and supplies ordered through a local company (McNiece TENS) at a cost of approx. \$150.00 per month.
- ❑ Over 20 clinicians who provide wound care services to patients in SW-LHIN have received the advanced training needed to apply ESTIM safely and effectively.

Who is appropriate for ESTIM?

- ❑ Clients with a chronic wound of known etiology, standard wound care (dressings, pressure relief, footwear) have been addressed, client is medically stable and has demonstrated adherence to recommended wound care program.
- ❑ There are certain situations that ESTIM cannot be applied (contraindications), the ESTIM provider specialist will assess the client and determine if ESTIM is appropriate.
- ❑ Wounds present for less than 6 months are known to respond best to ESTIM.

How do I order ESTIM?

- ❑ If you have a client with a chronic wound who is not progressing (after 3 months), you can ask the care coordinator to refer to a local clinician listed in the ESTIM PROVIDER POOL.