

PERCUTANEOUS TIBIAL NERVE STIMULATION (PTNS)

Introduction

Overactive bladder (OAB) is a group of urinary symptoms that include frequency, urgency and urge incontinence. Basically, it is a feeling of needing to go to the toilet very often, day and night, often with a sudden strong urge and loss of control if you do not get there in time. When lifestyle changes and medications aren't enough, your urologist may offer some minimally invasive treatment options, especially if the symptoms are distressing, interfering with daily activities and work, or there is significant leakage and you have to use pads or pull-ups all the time.

Percutaneous nerve stimulation (PTNS) involves stimulating the bladder nerves with electrical pulses transmitted indirectly through the tibial nerve in the leg that runs next to it. These pulses help to modify the signals that control bladder function. This 30 minute procedure is done in the clinic by placing a small acupuncture needle near the ankle.

What are the alternatives?

There are three main procedures used in managing OAB. The first two options, PTNS and sacral neuromodulation (SNM) involve bladder nerve stimulation using electrical pulses. SNM works better than PTNS but is more invasive, as a small device that generates the electrical pulses is permanently implanted into the lower back and buttock areas. The third option involves injection small amounts of botulinum toxin or Botox® into the bladder to relax the muscle and reduce irritability. All three treatments are eligible for Medicare rebates and highly effective in reducing the number of toilet visits and accidents.

Living with OAB <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUU3WYkGplU&t=12s>
Taking control of OAB <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60db5CtANHY&t=211s>
PTNS (2:47 mins) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YpwjTcehVA>

What does the procedure involve?

Percutaneous nerve stimulation (PTNS) is performed in the office by transmitting electrical impulses to the sacral nerve through a fine acupuncture needle placed near the ankle. In the initial phase, 12 treatments lasting 30 minutes each are administered weekly over 3 months. If successful, 5 further treatments are given over 3 months as a tapering phase. Finally, the treatment is given once a month on a maintenance schedule.

What should I expect after each session?

Most people have no side-effects, but you may get minor discomfort or swelling for 24 hours at the needle site near the ankle. It will probably take 6-8 weeks to notice any change in symptoms. Treatment can be stopped at any time, although it is best to complete the first 12 sessions before deciding. You may continue using other bladder control treatments whilst having PTNS.

Schedule

The treatment is carried out over three phases:

- 1) Induction - 12 sessions, one per week
- 2) Tapering - 5 sessions, one every 2-3 weeks
- 3) Maintenance - unlimited sessions, one per month

Each treatment takes 30 minutes and will usually be done on a Monday or Tuesday when Dr Ooi is consulting at the rooms. Please bring a book or something to occupy yourself with. You will be asked to empty your bladder prior to treatment as you are unable to move for 30 minutes whilst sitting in a chair.



Image taken from Endotherapeutics website:

<https://www.endotherapeutics.com.au/product/urgent-pc-ptns-oab/>

Cost per session (as of 1st Jan 2023)

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|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Upfront cost | \$ 400.00 (30% lower than AMA) |
| (-) Medicare rebate 36672 | \$ 179.75 |
| Out-of-pocket cost | \$ 220.25 |

Once paid, the account is transmitted to Medicare electronically and your rebate should be received within two working days.