Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS)

Depression can have a profound effect on one’s life. Often, medications can help manage depression. However, this may not be enough for everyone. Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) is another treatment for depression. Your psychiatrist will evaluate you to see if this may help you. TMS is given to those who:

- Have not responded to medications
- Do not tolerate medication side effects

Before TMS

TMS works by stimulating the mood area of the brain. It is safe and can be done while you are in the hospital or as an outpatient. Your psychiatrist will explain the benefits of TMS and answer any questions you have.

TMS takes about 20 minutes. It is done 5 days a week for 4 to 6 weeks.

- A psychiatrist who is an expert in TMS will first meet with you. This is to determine if TMS is right for you.
- Be sure to tell your doctor or care team if you have anything metallic in your head. Metal can interfere with this treatment.
- A TMS doctor will show you the equipment so you know what to expect.
- The doctor will measure your head to identify the exact location to treat.
- There is nothing you need to do to prepare for this treatment.

During TMS – What to Expect

- There will be no shots, medicines or IVs (into-the-vein needles).
- During TMS, you will be sitting in a comfortable chair. You can read, talk, or listen to music.
■ A magnetic coil will be placed on your scalp.
■ A small amount of energy is sent from the coil to an exact place just inside the brain.
■ You will be wearing ear plugs as the machine makes a loud tapping sound.
■ If you have any discomfort, let the person who is giving the treatment know. They can adjust the TMS settings.

**Side Effects**

■ Headaches are common and may be treated with pain medicine.
■ You may feel mild to moderate scalp discomfort under the coil. This gets better after the first week of treatment. We can give you pain pills if needed.
■ Although unlikely, there is a very small risk of seizures.

When treatment is finished, you can resume all unit activities.

**Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources**

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.