

# Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS)

Colchester East Hants  
Health Centre (CEHHC)

Please arrive 15 minutes before your  
appointment time and register at the  
Neuromodulation Clinic reception desk.

**Notes:**

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This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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

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

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# Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS)

## What is rTMS?

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

## How does rTMS work?

rTMS 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?

- For most people, the risk of serious side effects is low.
- Possible side effects include:
  - › Eye blinking or contraction (squeezing) of face muscles that you cannot control during the treatment. These do not hurt and stop when the treatment 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.

## What will happen when I finish my treatments?

- The rTMS team does not offer long-term psychiatric care, therapy, or medication management.
- Once you are done your rTMS treatments, you will need to see your primary health care provider or psychiatrist for follow-up care.

### If you have any of these symptoms:

- › Thoughts of ending your life
  - › Thoughts of harming (hurting) yourself or others
  - › Anxiety that affects your daily activities (you cannot go to work or school)
  - › Psychotic or distorted thinking (believing thoughts that are not real or are not based in reality)
  - › Depression
  - › More alcohol or drug use than usual
  - › Any other mental health changes
  - **Call the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line:**
    - › Phone (toll-free): 1-888-429-8167
  - or
  - **Go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.**
- Do not call the Neuromodulation Clinic, as we may not be able to respond right away.**

- When the treatment starts, you will feel short bursts of stimulation on your scalp, followed by short pauses. Many people say it feels like static electricity or tapping. This feeling is usually strongest during the first few sessions. It gets weaker over time as the nerves around the treatment area get used to the stimulation.
- You will have between 20 and 30 treatments over 4 to 6 weeks.

- **Please note that any appointments you miss may affect how well your rTMS treatments work.**
- **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.

- There is a small risk of seizures (movements that you cannot control). The risk is higher for:
  - › People with epilepsy
  - › People who take more than 300 mg per day of bupropion (Wellbutrin®)
  - › People who drink alcohol regularly
  - › People who have low blood sugar during treatment

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

Neuromodulation Clinic  
 Outpatient Mental Health and Addictions  
 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, B-wing  
 Colchester East Hants Health Centre (CEHHC)

- rTMS treatments are done Monday to Friday.
- **Please arrive 15 minutes before your appointment time** and register at the Neuromodulation Clinic reception desk.

### **Where can I park?**

- Parking is available for \$2 for the first hour to a maximum of \$5 for the day. Please take your parking ticket with you into the Clinic. You can pay for parking at the parking machine in the lobby. There is also a bank machine (ATM) in the lobby.
- There is also free parking at the Rath Eastlink Community Centre across the street.

## How do I get ready for my treatments?

- If your health care team decides that rTMS may help you, they will make an appointment for you at the Neuromodulation Clinic. Clinic staff will call you with your first treatment appointment date and time, and any instructions.
- At your first appointment, you will meet with an rTMS psychiatrist (a doctor who specializes in diagnosing and treating mental illness) and a nurse. Together, you will decide if rTMS is right for you.
- If you decide to go ahead with rTMS treatments, the psychiatrist will ask you to review and sign a consent form.
- The rTMS team will decide where to place the coil and the strength of stimulation for your treatments.
- You may have to adjust or stop some medications, like:
  - › Benzodiazepines, like lorazepam (Ativan®), clonazepam
  - › Neuropathic agents, like gabapentin, pregabalin. They may affect the results of your treatment. The psychiatrist will work with your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) 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 least 48 hours (2 days) before your appointment time.**

› Phone: 902-893-5526

**or**

› Phone: 902-898-2649

## What will happen during the treatment?

- You will sit comfortably in a chair. You will be awake during the treatment.
- You **do not** need any 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. The device is a weighted plate about the size of a paperback book. It is shaped like a pair of binoculars and is held up by a metal arm. **You must keep your head still during the treatment so the device stays in place.**