TENS INFORMATION HANDOUT

**Definition of TENS:**

TENS stands for *Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation*. In other words, electrical impulses are allowed to pass through the skin in order to excite a nerve.

**Purpose and Use of TENS:**

TENS is a method used to manage acute and chronic pain without the use of drugs. It has been effective in managing pain associated with surgery, sprains, strains, trauma, rheumatoid arthritis, and neuralgias. It is a non-addictive, low risk, and non-invasive technique used to control pain. It is not, by any means, a curative form of treatment.

**How TENS Works:**

Most TENS units are a small pocket-sized unit powered by one 9 volt battery. Attached to the outside of the unit are two lead wires where two pins and/or snaps connect on each wire. All units come with a set of four reusable pads or electrodes. These are placed on the skin surrounding the area involved. By attaching the pins/snaps to the pads, the electricity can pass from the unit making the circuit complete.

As the intensity is turned up slowly, the electrical current enters the body from the electrodes through the skin to the surrounding nerve fibers. This triggers the release of hormones from within the body. These hormones contain pain relievers. By increasing the circulation of these hormones, the person’s pain may be lessened. It is also believed that the electrical stimulation itself helps to block the pain messages being sent to the brain, thus also decreasing the body's perception of pain.

**Hazards:**

TENS units are NOT to be used by patients with PACEMAKERS, DEFIBRILLATORS, DIABETIC PUMPS, PREGNANT WOMEN, and patients with SEIZURE DISORDERS.

TENS units are NOT to be used over the heart, throat, brain, or spinal cord.

One of the major side effects from the TENS unit may be skin irritation. Some people may develop a rash if they are sensitive to the materials used in the electrodes or the connecting wires.