

Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS)



What is TMS?

Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation is a painless and effective treatment for major depressive episodes. It involves the use of coil being placed against your head which delivers a pulsated magnetic field targeting the cerebral cortex, the region of the brain which controls mood. This induces a small electrical current which stimulates the nerve cells that may be underactive when experiencing depression.

Side Effects of TMS

rTMS is a very safe option for the treatment of depression that has been studied for over 30 years and has not shown any long term side effects. The most common side effects experienced include scalp discomfort, headache, brief periods of tiredness and mood fluctuations. Although side effects may occur, the symptoms are usually mild and do not prevent you from driving or returning to work after your treatment or require you to stop the treatment. There is a very rare risk of seizures (1 in 30,000) but we conduct a risk screening and assessment prior to you commencing treatment. There is only minimal data on the safety of rTMS on pregnant women and people under the age of 18.

Medicare Criteria

From November 2021, rTMS will be listed on the Medicare Benefits Schedule. To be eligible for this rebate you must fulfil the following criteria:

- Be an adult over the age of 18
- Have been diagnosed with a major depressive episode
- Have failed to have a satisfactory improvement in your mood following a trial of at least 2 different classes of antidepressants (unless contraindicated)
- Have undertaken psychological therapy (unless inappropriate to do so)
- Have not received rTMS previously.

The Process

Once we have received your referral, you will be contacted by a nurse to conduct a brief screening and risk assessment and to ensure you meet the required criteria for Medicare. There will then be a case conference discussion with the TMS team. If suitable to receive TMS, you will then be contacted to book in an initial assessment with the treating psychiatrist and to begin treatment. The initial assessment normally takes 1 hour, with subsequent treatments taking 30 minutes, Monday to Friday, for 4 weeks. You will be reviewed throughout this time to assess how you are responding to the treatment.

Enquiries

For more information, please contact Ramsay Clinic Lakeside on (02) 4941 3713. All referrals can be faxed through to (02) 49413 476.

Ramsay Clinic Lakeside

Fairfax Road, Warners Bay NSW 2282

Ph: 02 4941 3713 – Fax: 02 4941 3476

ramsaymentalhealth.com.au

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