InterStim Therapy

What is InterStim Therapy? InterStim therapy is a treatment that may relieve urinary and bowel control symptoms. InterStim therapy involves surgically implanting a small neurostimulator device and a lead, which delivers gentle stimulation to the sacral nerve, much like a pacemaker does for your heart. The stimulation may reduce your symptoms to a tolerable level, enabling you to resume many of your daily functions.

Bladder control problems are often caused by interruptions in the communication between the brain and the bladder. The InterStim system can “jump start” the signals traveling along the nerves to your bladder, and help restore more normal bladder function.

The InterStim Therapy system
The InterStim Therapy system includes three parts:

- A small neurostimulator device which generates mild electrical stimulation, similar to a pacemaker.
- A lead or insulated wire which is also implanted. One end of the lead is connected to the neurostimulator and the other end delivers mild electrical pulses to your sacral nerve area.
- A therapy control device, called a Patient Programmer. You can use this hand-held device to adjust the therapy or turn the therapy on or off. The programmer is used by holding it over the implanted neurostimulator.

Your clinician will also have a device to control the amount of therapy the neurostimulator provides.

Is InterStim right for me? Many women and men experience symptoms of over active bladder (OAB), urinary frequency and urgency, urge incontinence or urinary retention. Your doctor may recommend InterStim therapy if medication, biofeedback therapy, pelvic floor physical therapy or behavior modification have not provided enough benefit for you.

InterStim trial

Step 1: Percutaneous nerve evaluation (PNE) is a minimally invasive procedure, performed in the clinic, under local anesthesia. Two temporary leads (special wires) are placed through a pinpoint opening in your sacrum. After the leads are positioned and secured, stimulation is delivered to your sacral nerve as you go about your normal activities. You will return to the clinic one week later for removal of the leads. If your urinary symptoms improve significantly with stimulation, you may proceed to InterStim implant (Step 3).
Step 2: If the results of the PNE trial are inconclusive, your doctor may recommend another test called a Staged InterStim trial, involving one or two outpatient surgeries performed under light sedation about two weeks apart. A chronic lead will be implanted near your tailbone in the stage 1 procedure. During the trial period, an InterStim nurse or technician will instruct you to test different settings on the lead using a control box. If the test is successful, you will proceed to step 3. If there was not marked improvement in symptoms during the trial, the lead will be removed in the office or with a second surgery.

Step 3: If your trial phase was the PNE, you will have the chronic lead implanted in the sacrum, which will be connected to a small pulse generator implanted in your buttock. If you underwent the stage 1 trial, and had improvement in your urinary symptoms, stage 2 will involve implanting the pulse generator and connecting it to the existing lead.

After InterStim implant you will have follow-up appointments with your doctor to make sure the device is programmed in the best way to control your symptoms. You will receive a remote control device to control stimulation, and you may see the InterStim nurse or technician as needed to adjust settings for optimal benefit. This may take a few visits after the initial implant. Once the most appropriate settings are determined, you will need to be followed annually or as needed. Patients can expect up to 6 years of benefit before the device may need to be replaced due to battery depletion.