

Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS)

For patients of St. Joseph's Health Centre

What is rTMS?

rTMS is a treatment that does not use medicine to help with major depressive disorder.

How does it work?

rTMS uses a strong electromagnetic field to directly stimulate specific areas of your brain. These areas help control your impulses, thoughts, emotions and behaviours. These areas may be more or less active in people with depression and mental health disorders.

With repeated treatments, the magnetic pulses change the activity of the brain cells (neurons) and the pathways between brain cells, returning the brain to normal functioning. rTMS does not affect your memory, attention, concentration or intellectual function.

Who can have rTMS?

Most people can have rTMS. You may **not** be able to get rTMS if you:

- Have a history of epilepsy or other seizure disorders
- Have any metallic implants in the skull
- Have a history of drug abuse or alcohol within the past 3 to 6 months
- Have any unstable medical condition
- Are pregnant or trying to get pregnant

What are the potential risks of rTMS?

For many people, there is no serious risk with rTMS. rTMS may cause seizures in very few people (less than 1 percent). These seizures will resolve without treatment.

What are some common side effects of rTMS?

Some common side effects may include:

- Involuntary eye blinking or facial movements during treatment. This is not painful and does not continue with more treatment.
- Dizziness or light-headedness that goes away quickly after your treatment.
- Mild discomfort where your scalp was stimulated.
- Mild headache. This usually goes away within 24 hours or after taking acetaminophen (Tylenol).

What can you expect at your first appointment?

After you have been referred to the Neurostimulation Clinic, you will see the rTMS doctor to confirm if rTMS is right for you. If the treatment is right for you, the rTMS technician will meet with you to set up daily appointments to start your treatment.

Make sure to come to the clinic 30 minutes before your **first appointment** to fill in some paper work.

What happens next?

You will need to come to the clinic for your daily appointments over the next 4 to 6 weeks. Your treatment length is individualized and will be discussed with you.

What happens during treatment?

You will be awake during your treatment and sit in a recliner chair. You will not get any medicine or sedation (be put to sleep).

A magnetic coil will be put against your scalp to target a specific area of your brain. Your treatment will last 15 to 30 minutes and you can go back to your normal activities after treatment.

What happens after my treatment is finished?

When you finish your treatment, you will see the rTMS doctor to see if the treatment worked for you and if you need more treatment. If you do not need more treatment, you will go back to your referring doctor for future care.

If you have questions about appointment or cannot make your appointment, call the clinic at 416-530-6591.

Unity Health Toronto cares about your health. For health information you can trust, visit us online at unityhealth.to/learn.

This information does not replace the advice you receive from your health care provider. If you have questions, ask your health care team.