

Hypoglossal nerve stimulation for moderate to severe obstructive sleep apnoea

Information for the public

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There is not much good evidence about how well this procedure works or how safe it is for moderate to severe obstructive sleep apnoea. This procedure can be used but only when patients are having regular checks to see how well it is working or if it has caused problems.

Obstructive sleep apnoea causes breathing to repeatedly stop for short periods during sleep. It happens because the muscles and soft tissues in the throat relax too much during sleep. The tongue may fall backwards and contribute to the narrowing of the upper airway. In this procedure a device is implanted under the skin in the chest. It is connected by a lead to a nerve under the tongue (hypoglossal nerve), which controls muscles in the tongue and airway. The device sends electrical impulses to the nerve, which makes the tongue contract and stops it falling backwards. The aim is to keep the airway open during sleep.

[NHS Choices](#) may be a good place to find out more. NICE's information on [interventional procedures guidance](#) has more about what a procedure is and how we assess them.

Is this procedure right for me?

If you've been offered this procedure, your healthcare professionals should discuss with you what is involved, and tell you about the risks and benefits. They should talk with you about your options, and listen carefully to your views and concerns. Your family can be involved too, if you wish. All of this should happen before you agree (consent) to have the procedure. You should also be told how to find more information about the procedure. Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Some questions to think about

- What does the procedure involve?
- What are the possible benefits? How likely am I to get them?
- What are the risks or side effects? How likely are they?
- What happens if the procedure doesn't work or something goes wrong?
- What happens if I don't want the procedure? Are there other treatments available?

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