



# Labor TENS Unit

an online resource  
created to accompany

## *Pre- and Perinatal Massage Therapy:*

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## Labor TENS Unit

TENS is an acronym for Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation. Labor TENS is a safe, non-pharmacological method of pain control in labor and especially of back pain. Research on TENS shows that laboring women using the device use less pain medication. Women rated it as moderately or very helpful in relieving pain and would use it again in a future labor.

Clients may purchase or lease their own labor TENS unit. Some hospitals and birth centers offer them to their patients. Consider attending a training about how to use a labor TENS unit safely in labor.

The TENS unit should NOT be used in combination with water including a shower or a bath or other hydrotherapy. Studies show that the TENS unit is contraindicated for patients with demand cycle pace-makers and with seizure disorders. The TENS unit has been used with external electronic fetal monitoring. TENS may sometimes affect an internal fetal monitoring devices.





The self-adhesive pads are attached to the TENS unit and should be applied to dry skin on the laboring person's back as directed. By using this handheld battery operated device, mild electrical impulses are transmitted through the skin to stimulate nerve fibers. The laboring woman can adjust the output control slowly until a mild tingling sensation is felt at a comfortable level. Labor TENS units have a boost button to alternate between pulse and continuous modes. Pulse mode is often used between contractions, while continuous mode may be used during contractions.

## References

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