

Patient rTMS FAQ's

General Inquiries

Q: What is rTMS and how does it work?

Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS) uses repeating, targeted magnetic pulses applied to the scalp to stimulate the brain region involved in mood regulation, specifically the prefrontal cortex. Over a series of sessions, this stimulation helps rebalance brain activity and improve communication in neural circuits linked to depression and emotional regulation.

Q: What conditions does rTMS treat?

In Australia, rTMS is primarily used to treat major depressive disorder. But is being increasingly applied to other psychiatric and neurological conditions as an off-label treatment.

Q: How much does it cost?

The cost of rTMS treatment varies depending on which clinic you attend, and if you are eligible for Medicare Rebate. Medicare currently offers a rebate for those seeking rTMS treatment for depression if:

- A person has never had rTMS before
- The person is 18 years of age or older
- The person has tried at least two classes of antidepressant medication with limited success
- The person has attended or is attending psychotherapy

Medicare supports up to 35 treatments in the first instance, and up to 15 maintenance treatments.

If a person wishes to receive rTMS treatment for depression, some clinics fully bulk-bill (like the Perron Institute rTMS Clinic) which case rTMS treatment is free. Meanwhile, other clinics partially bulk-bill with a \$30-50 out of pocket expense per treatment session.

Q: What if I am not eligible for Medicare?

If you are aged between 15 to 17, have tried at least one antidepressant, and have received or are currently attending psychotherapy, you may be eligible for fully funded rTMS treatment through the **Perron Institute TMS clinic**. **Call, Email or Scan the QR code on the back page to learn more.**

Q: How long does the full treatment take to complete?

rTMS is typically delivered once a day, Monday to Friday (5 days per week). A full course of treatment usually consists of 30–35 sessions and takes approximately 6-7 weeks to complete.

Q: How long is each treatment session?

The treatment can take anywhere between 5 to 20 minutes, depending on the protocol prescribed by the rTMS psychiatrist. With an extra 10 minutes before and after each session for preparation, for a total appointment time is generally ~30 minutes.

Still have Questions?

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Q: What will happen during my first rTMS appointment?

The first appointment involves a consultation with our rTMS-accredited psychiatrist, who will assess your suitability for treatment and take a comprehensive psychiatric and medical history.

Q: What happens during treatment?

In your first treatment session, the psychiatrist will 'prescribe' the treatment to you. They will deliver single TMS pulses to a region of your brain that controls your hand, at different intensities, they will assess your responses to this and to determine the right intensity for you.

During each treatment session after that, you will be comfortably seated in a reclining chair while a series of magnetic pulses is delivered to a targeted frontal area of your scalp. The treatment is non-invasive and painless, and you can relax during the session.

Q: Does it hurt?

TMS is a non-invasive, painless procedure. However, it may cause some discomfort because the magnetic pulse also activates the muscles in the face and head, which can cause some localised muscle twitching during stimulation but which stops once treatment finishes.

Q: What are the side effects?

It is common for people to experience temporary headaches, and face twitching while being treated. Some people also experience slight dizziness. Most of these side effects tend to go away halfway through treatment. rTMS may also be associated with short-term fatigue, and some shoulder and neck tension. The most severe and very rare side effect of rTMS is seizure. The chances of a seizure are less than 0.1%. We will screen everyone thoroughly for safety and any pre-existing medical conditions. Overall, research shows that rTMS is safe and well tolerated treatment for adults and youth, with only short-term mild side effects, which usually improve over the course of treatment and resolve shortly afterwards.

What Can I Expect after Treatment?

Q: Can I drive after treatment?

Treatment is safe, non-invasive, and has very few mild side effects. People generally resume normal daily activities such as driving after each treatment session.

Q: When will I see results and how long will they last?

Everyone responds to rTMS differently and may experience mood improvement at different rates, some after a week of starting treatment and others a week after rTMS finishes. Generally, people will not notice immediate improvements after the first few sessions but will instead notice gradual improvements as the treatment course progresses.

Q: Will rTMS affect my memory?

No, rTMS does not have any effects on memory but you may notice changes in your mood, energy, and concentration.



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