



Monday through Friday

8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.

Saturdays & Holidays

9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

Sundays & Christmas

Noon to 4:00 P.M.

DEVICES AND INJECTIONS: It's About Pain: Vol 1, No 10. June 2017

With all the adverse publicity re: dangers of opioids, patients with chronic pain are living in fear that their access to symptom-reducing meds may be severely restricted. Manufacturers have been forced to cut production by 25% this year, and some drugs will be pulled from the market by FDA edict. Press releases show that the number of opioid prescriptions, has been falling since 2015. What are people to do if/when they can't get their medication? Everybody is petrified at the notion of trying to procure opioids from the black market, or even having to go to heroin for relief.

So, there's a lot of interest in other mechanisms of pain relief.

Probably the easiest and least expensive, is the **TENS unit**, which involves a battery powered machine confusing the brain by vibrating or electrically stimulating, the body area from which pain is coming. Formerly available only for periodic use in a Physical Therapy Clinic, they can now be prescribed by physicians/practitioners. Recently a version has become available without a prescription.

Another device is the **Spinal Cord Stimulator**, an implanted device that tries to interrupt the passage of pain up through the spinal cord to the brain.

And there are multiple **implanted pumps**, which dispense narcotics like hydromorphone, morphine, or fentanyl, or muscle relaxers like baclofen and valium. These are placed by an interventional pain specialist, and refilled via injections of drug into a reservoir planted inside the abdomen or other locations.

For some cases of skeletal (neck or low back) pain, **inversion machines** may help—they allow you to hang upside down, with ankles locked into the device, such that gravity helps open up spaces between vertebrae and allow disc material to return to its normal anatomic location.

Home traction is another possibility. Most commonly this has been used for neck pain—a series of straps lifts the head and jaw upward and is connected to a cable that is hung over a door, with weights attached to it, so it pulls the head and neck upwards. A variation on this these is a device that is worn like a wide collar, and inflated to again increase the space between the jaw and the base of the neck.

Yet another machine that can help low back problems, is the "**Game Ready**" machine that bathes the affected location in ice water while electrically stimulating (tickling) the nearby muscles, so as to relieve spasm.

Also, **injections** may help just about any area of pain, using a mix of cortisone and anesthetics. Epidurals of lumbar and cervical spine are common but so are local injections into shoulders, knees, ankles, rib junctions, etc.