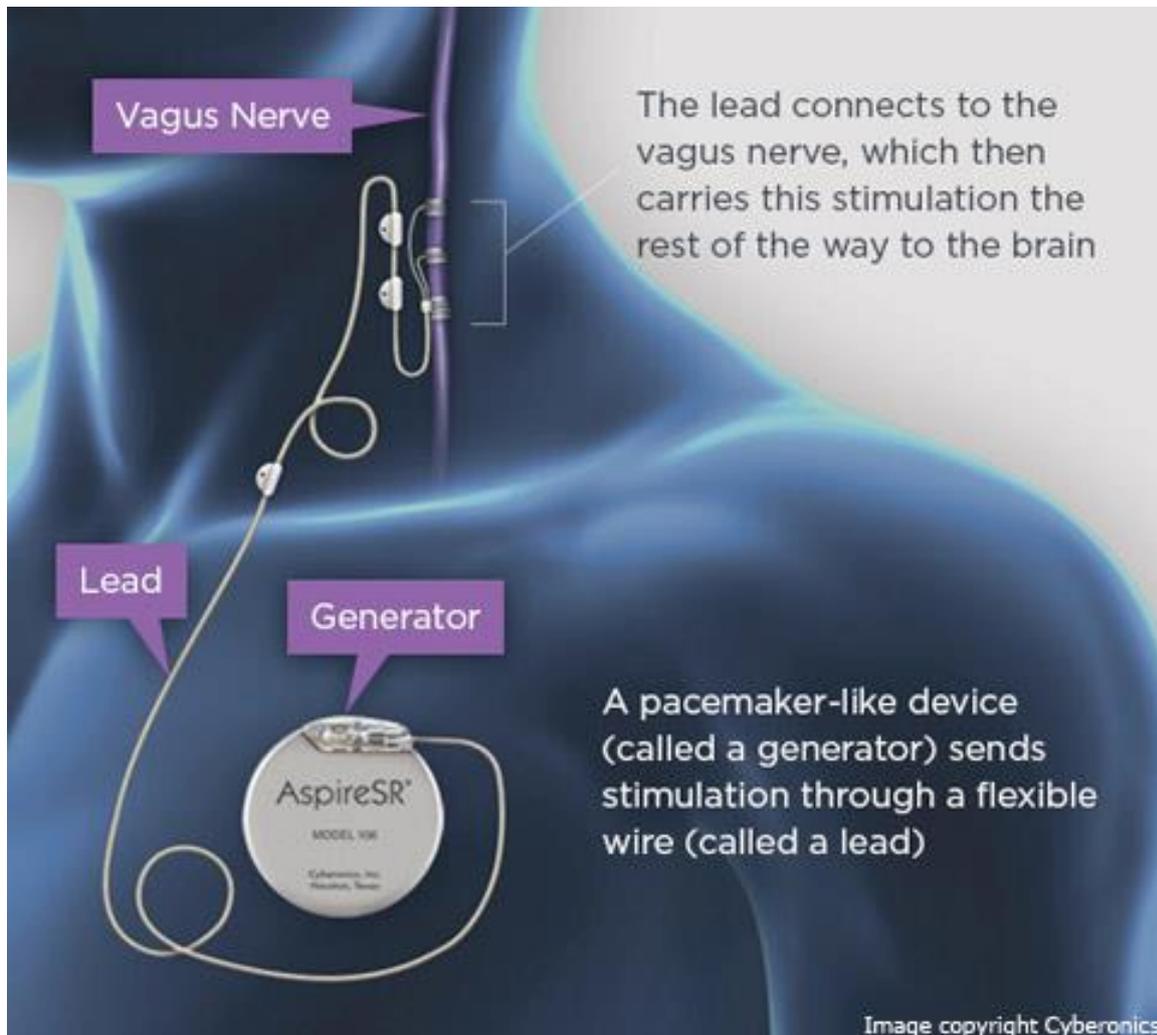


# Vagus Nerve Stimulation (VNS) - what is it?





## Why have I been given this booklet?

You and your epilepsy doctor have decided to try Vagus Nerve Stimulation (VNS) treatment to help control your epilepsy and seizures.

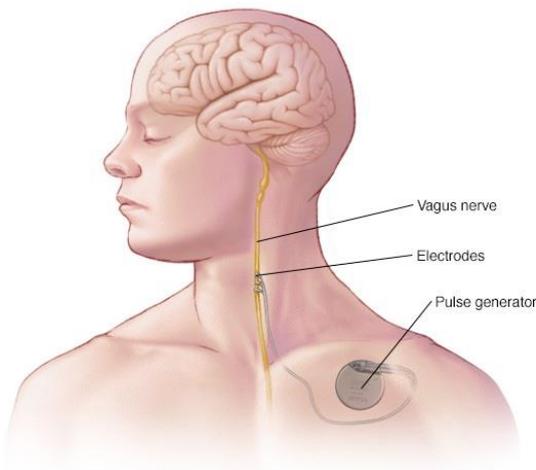
This booklet will tell you about VNS.



## What is VNS?

The VNS is a small machine, which can help to control your epilepsy.

It can help to reduce the number of seizures and the length of time they last.



The machine is placed under the skin near your armpit in a small operation.



### **How does it work?**

The VNS sends small electrical signals to the brain.

This helps to block other signals to the brain, which cause your seizures.



### **Will I need an operation?**

You will need a small operation to put the VNS under your skin. You will be put to sleep during the operation with a general anaesthetic.

This operation can normally be done as a day case or with an overnight stay, without needing to stay in hospital longer.



### **How will this help me?**

The VNS may stop your seizures or cut down the number that you have or reduce how long they last.



### How might it affect me?

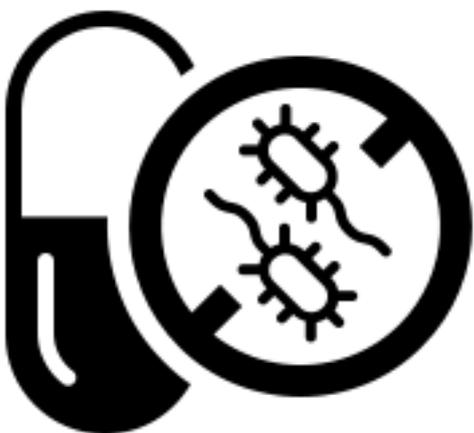
Some people find that the operation or the VNS can make them feel a bit poorly.



When the VNS device is turned on it could make you:

- Feel sick
- Have a cough
- Have a sore throat or croaky voice

This typically doesn't last very long. Your doctor can also change the settings on the device to help with these side effects.



### Could anything go wrong?

A small number of people may get an infection. This may make your wound feel sore for a while.

You may need to take some antibiotics if this happens.

There are other small but important risks of surgery that

	<p>your surgeon will discuss with you.</p>
 An icon depicting a medicine bottle with a plus sign on its label and several pills (two round and two oval) scattered to the right.	<p><b>Will I need to keep taking my medication?</b></p> <p>You will need to keep taking your epilepsy medicine after the operation.</p> <p>The VNS is additional to your medications.</p>
 An icon showing a doctor standing on the left with a stethoscope and a patient sitting on a chair on the right, gesturing towards the doctor.	<p><b>What happens after the operation?</b></p> <p>The VNS nurse will show you how the VNS works. You will be given a special magnet which will help you to control your VNS. The magnet will help to reduce or shorten your seizures.</p>



### **Will I need to come back to hospital?**

You will see your VNS nurse every few weeks at first.

Later, you will see them every couple of months so they can adjust the dose of your VNS.



### **Do I need to tell anyone I have a VNS?**

If you go into hospital for any reason, it is important that you tell them you have a VNS.



The hospital doctors and nurses will need to know about your VNS before you have an MRI scan. You can still have an MRI scan of your head, but special precautions will need to take place beforehand.

You will not be able to have an MRI scan of your whole body if you have a VNS.

## Useful sources of information

### Epilepsy Society

UK charity helping lives of people with epilepsy through research, advocacy and care.

**Web:** <https://epilepsysociety.org.uk/>  
<https://epilepsysociety.org.uk/about-epilepsy/treatment/vagus-nerve-stimulation>

**Helpline:** 01494 601 400

### Epilepsy Action

Epilepsy Action is a community of people committed to a better life for everyone affected by epilepsy.

**Web:** <https://www.epilepsy.org.uk/>  
<https://www.epilepsy.org.uk/info/treatment/vns-vagus-nerve-stimulation>

**Helpline:** 0808 800 5050

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about VNS, please contact our Epilepsy Clinical Nurse Specialist on 020 8725 4110 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, excluding bank holidays) or [adult.epilepsynurse@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:adult.epilepsynurse@stgeorges.nhs.uk) .

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor

between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### **NHS Choices**

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### **NHS 111**

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

### **AccessAble**

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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