

how is axonics therapy done

How Is Axonics Therapy Done? A Closer Look at This Innovative Treatment

how is axonics therapy done is a question that many individuals struggling with bladder control issues ask when exploring treatment options. Axonics therapy, a cutting-edge solution for managing overactive bladder, urinary incontinence, and fecal incontinence, has gained attention for offering a minimally invasive and effective approach. Understanding the process behind this therapy not only eases concerns but also empowers patients to make informed decisions about their health.

What Is Axonics Therapy?

Before diving into how is axonics therapy done, it's helpful to grasp what the therapy entails. Axonics therapy involves the use of a small, rechargeable neurostimulator device designed to regulate nerve signals controlling bladder and bowel functions. Unlike traditional methods that rely heavily on medication or invasive surgery, Axonics provides targeted electrical stimulation to the sacral nerves, which play a pivotal role in bladder and bowel control.

This therapy is especially useful for individuals who have not found relief through conservative treatments like pelvic floor exercises or medications. The implantable device continuously delivers mild electrical pulses, helping restore normal function and reduce the urgency and frequency of incontinence episodes.

How Is Axonics Therapy Done? The Procedure Explained

Understanding how is axonics therapy done involves looking closely at the implantation procedure, its preparation, and what patients can expect during and after the process.

Initial Consultation and Testing

The journey begins with a thorough evaluation by a healthcare professional, usually a urologist or urogynecologist. This assessment often includes:

- Reviewing medical history and symptoms
- Performing physical exams
- Conducting urodynamic tests to measure bladder function
- Trial stimulation to assess if nerve modulation improves symptoms

The trial phase is crucial because it helps determine if a patient will benefit from the permanent implant. During this stage, temporary leads are placed near the sacral nerves, and external stimulators deliver electrical pulses. If significant symptom improvement is observed, the patient is considered a good candidate for Axonics therapy.

The Implantation Surgery

Once the trial confirms suitability, the permanent implant procedure is scheduled. Here's how is axonics therapy done in the surgical context:

- **Preparation:** The patient is typically given local anesthesia combined with sedation or general anesthesia, depending on individual circumstances and physician preference.
- **Incision and Lead Placement:** A small incision is made in the lower back or buttock area to access the sacral nerves. Thin leads (electrodes) are carefully positioned near the S3 sacral nerve root, the target for stimulation.
- **Device Implantation:** The Axonics neurostimulator, roughly the size of a coin, is implanted under the skin, usually in the upper buttock area. The leads are connected to the device.
- **Testing and Programming:** Before closing the incision, the device is tested to ensure proper nerve stimulation. Initial programming adjusts pulse intensity and frequency for optimal therapy.
- **Closure:** The incision is sutured, and a sterile dressing is applied.

The entire procedure generally takes less than two hours and is often performed on an outpatient basis, allowing patients to return home the same day.

Post-Procedure Recovery

After the implantation, patients may experience mild discomfort or soreness around the incision site for a few days. It's important to follow the doctor's instructions regarding activity restrictions, wound care, and device management.

Most patients can resume normal activities within a week, although heavy lifting and strenuous exercise should be avoided during the initial healing phase. Follow-up visits are scheduled to monitor healing progress and fine-tune the device's settings remotely through a programmer.

How Does the Axonics Device Work?

To truly appreciate how is axonics therapy done, it's essential to understand the technology's function. The implanted neurostimulator sends gentle electrical impulses to the sacral nerves, which influence bladder and bowel muscles. By modulating these signals, the device helps to:

- Reduce involuntary bladder contractions
- Improve bladder storage capacity
- Enhance the coordination between bladder and sphincter muscles
- Decrease episodes of urgency and leakage

This targeted approach contrasts with systemic medications, which can cause unwanted side effects elsewhere in the body. The device's rechargeable battery can last several years, and patients manage the therapy through a handheld remote control, adjusting settings within prescribed limits.

Benefits of Axonics Therapy Compared to Traditional Treatments

Discussing how is axonics therapy done also involves highlighting why it might be a preferred option for many. Some notable benefits include:

- **Minimally Invasive:** The implantation involves a small incision and usually outpatient surgery, reducing hospital stay and recovery time.
- **Long-lasting Relief:** The device provides continuous therapy, often delivering more consistent symptom control than daily medications.
- **Rechargeable Device:** Unlike some older neurostimulators requiring battery replacement surgery, Axonics uses a rechargeable battery lasting up to 15 years.
- **Customizable Therapy:** Patients and clinicians can adjust stimulation parameters to find the optimal balance of effectiveness and comfort.
- **Improved Quality of Life:** Many patients report significant improvements in daily activities, social interactions, and emotional well-being.

Who Is a Good Candidate for Axonics Therapy?

While exploring how is axonics therapy done, it's important to consider who stands to benefit most. Ideal candidates typically include:

- Adults with overactive bladder symptoms unresponsive to medications or behavioral therapies
- Individuals experiencing urinary or fecal incontinence impacting quality of life
- Patients without contraindications such as active infections or certain neurological disorders
- Those willing to commit to follow-up care and device maintenance

Healthcare providers conduct thorough screenings to ensure safety and maximize the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Living with Axonics Therapy: What to Expect

After implantation, patients usually need some time to get accustomed to the device. Here are some practical insights:

- **Device Management:** The handheld remote allows turning the device on/off and adjusting stimulation within prescribed ranges.
- **Recharging:** Patients recharge the device every one to two weeks using a wireless charger placed on the skin.
- **Follow-Up Care:** Regular check-ups help monitor device function, adjust settings, and address any concerns.
- **Activity Considerations:** Most daily activities are unaffected, but patients should inform healthcare providers about the implant before undergoing MRI scans or other medical procedures.

Many users find that, over time, the therapy integrates seamlessly into their daily routines, significantly reducing symptoms and enhancing peace of mind.

Final Thoughts on How Is Axonics Therapy Done

Understanding how is axonics therapy done reveals a thoughtful process combining modern technology with patient-centered care. From the initial consultation and trial stimulation to the minimally invasive implantation and ongoing management, this therapy offers hope for those grappling with challenging bladder and bowel conditions. By directly targeting the sacral nerves, Axonics therapy provides a tailored and effective approach, helping many regain control and improve their quality of life without the downsides of more invasive procedures or systemic medications. If you or a loved one face persistent symptoms, discussing Axonics therapy with a qualified healthcare

professional might open doors to a new chapter of comfort and confidence.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Axonics therapy and how is it performed?

Axonics therapy is a minimally invasive neuromodulation treatment designed to manage overactive bladder and urinary retention. It involves the implantation of a small, rechargeable neurostimulator device near the sacral nerves, which sends electrical pulses to regulate bladder function.

How is the Axonics device implanted during therapy?

The Axonics device is implanted through a minimally invasive surgical procedure, typically under local or general anesthesia. A small incision is made near the sacral area, and the neurostimulator is positioned close to the sacral nerves to provide electrical stimulation.

Is the Axonics therapy procedure painful?

Most patients experience minimal discomfort during the Axonics implantation procedure due to anesthesia. Post-operative pain is generally mild and manageable with prescribed pain medications, and most patients recover quickly.

How long does the Axonics therapy implantation procedure take?

The implantation procedure for Axonics therapy usually takes about one to two hours, after which patients may be observed for a short period before being discharged, often on the same day.

What happens after the Axonics device is implanted?

After implantation, the device is programmed and tested to ensure proper nerve stimulation. Patients receive training on how to recharge and control the device remotely. Follow-up appointments are scheduled to monitor progress and adjust settings if necessary.

Are there any pre-procedure preparations required for Axonics therapy?

Before undergoing Axonics therapy, patients typically undergo evaluation including urodynamic testing and imaging. They may be instructed to avoid certain medications and fasting before the procedure, as advised by their healthcare provider.

Additional Resources

Axonics Therapy: How Is It Done and What to Expect

how is axonics therapy done is a question that many patients and healthcare professionals explore as this innovative treatment gains traction for managing overactive bladder and urinary retention issues. Axonics therapy, a form of sacral neuromodulation, offers a promising alternative for individuals whose symptoms are not adequately controlled by medications or behavioral therapies. Understanding the procedural steps, the technology involved, and patient experience is key to appreciating the benefits and limitations of this therapy.

Understanding Axonics Therapy

Axonics therapy is designed to treat urinary and bowel dysfunction by delivering electrical stimulation to the sacral nerves, which are responsible for controlling bladder and bowel functions. Unlike traditional pharmacological treatments, axonics therapy targets the neurological pathways directly, aiming to restore normal communication between the brain and pelvic organs. This therapy uses a small, implantable neurostimulator device that modulates nerve activity to improve symptoms such as urgency, frequency, incontinence, and retention.

How Is Axonics Therapy Done: The Implantation Procedure

The process of axonics therapy begins with a thorough evaluation by a urologist or urogynecologist to determine candidacy. Patients typically undergo diagnostic tests such as urodynamics, imaging, and symptom assessments to ensure that sacral neuromodulation is appropriate for their condition.

Once eligibility is confirmed, the implantation procedure takes place in a surgical setting, often under local or general anesthesia, depending on patient and physician preference. The procedure involves the following steps:

1. **Placement of the Lead:** A small incision is made near the lower back or buttocks area to access the sacral nerve roots, usually at the S3 foramen. Using fluoroscopic guidance, a lead with electrodes is carefully positioned adjacent to the targeted nerve.
2. **Testing and Programming:** Temporary stimulation is applied to confirm that the correct nerve is being targeted, and to assess patient response. This phase helps ensure that the stimulation will alleviate symptoms effectively.
3. **Implantation of the Neurostimulator:** Once lead placement is confirmed, a pocket is created under the skin, typically in the upper buttock region, to house the implantable pulse generator (IPG). The lead is tunneled and connected to the IPG.
4. **Closing the Incisions:** The incisions are sutured, and the device is programmed externally to deliver optimal stimulation settings tailored to the patient's needs.

The entire procedure usually lasts about one to two hours. Patients can often go home the same day or after a short observation period.

Post-Operative Care and Device Management

Following implantation, patients receive guidance on managing the device, including how to adjust stimulation levels using a handheld programmer. The axonics system is designed for long-term use, with battery life typically extending up to 15 years before replacement may be necessary. Follow-up visits are scheduled to monitor device function, symptom improvement, and to make any necessary programming adjustments.

Patients are generally advised to avoid strenuous activities for a few weeks to allow proper healing. The minimally invasive nature of the procedure typically results in a quick recovery time compared to other surgical interventions for bladder dysfunction.

Comparing Axonics Therapy to Other Neuromodulation Techniques

Axonics therapy stands out among sacral neuromodulation options due to its rechargeable neurostimulator and compact size. Traditional devices, such as those from Medtronic, often require non-rechargeable batteries, leading to replacement surgeries every 3 to 5 years. The rechargeable capability of axonics devices reduces the frequency of surgical interventions, improving patient convenience and reducing healthcare costs over time.

Additionally, axonics therapy offers MRI compatibility, a significant advantage for patients requiring diagnostic imaging without device removal. This feature broadens the therapy's applicability, especially for individuals with chronic conditions who may need frequent MRI scans.

Advantages and Potential Limitations

- **Advantages:**

- Minimally invasive implantation with relatively low risk
- Long-lasting rechargeable battery
- Adjustable stimulation tailored to individual needs
- MRI-safe device design
- Proven efficacy in reducing overactive bladder symptoms and fecal incontinence

- **Potential Limitations:**

- Not suitable for all patients, especially those with certain neurological conditions

- Possible side effects like pain or discomfort at the implant site
- Requires regular follow-up and patient compliance for device management
- Initial cost and insurance coverage considerations

The Patient Experience: What to Expect During Axonics Therapy

Understanding how is axonics therapy done also involves appreciating the patient journey from candidacy assessment to long-term management. Many patients report a significant improvement in quality of life, with reductions in urinary urgency, frequency, and incontinence episodes observed during clinical trials.

Before committing to permanent implantation, patients may undergo a trial stimulation phase with a temporary lead to evaluate therapeutic response. This step helps to minimize the risk of ineffective treatment and ensures patient confidence.

Once implanted, patients can expect to learn how to operate the external controller, which adjusts stimulation intensity and can turn the device on or off. Some report mild sensations or tingling during stimulation, while others experience no noticeable feeling but benefit from symptom relief.

Ongoing Monitoring and Reprogramming

Because individual responses to nerve stimulation can vary, periodic device programming sessions are standard practice. These adjustments optimize treatment efficacy and minimize side effects. Healthcare providers may use telemedicine or in-office visits to manage device settings.

In rare cases, complications such as lead migration or infection may necessitate revision surgery. However, such occurrences are relatively uncommon, especially with proper surgical technique and post-operative care.

Axonics therapy represents a significant advance in neuromodulation, combining technological innovation with patient-centered treatment. The implantation procedure, while surgical, is streamlined to maximize safety and comfort. For patients seeking alternatives to medication or more invasive surgery, understanding how is axonics therapy done is an essential step in informed decision-making.

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