VNS Therapy® Guide

For children and those with special needs with drug-resistant epilepsy
Little Tony regularly suffered really bad epileptic seizures that he couldn’t do anything about. One day he and his parents went to see an epilepsy specialist – Doc. Teur – to talk about a special treatment called VNS Therapy. VNS means Vagus Nerve Stimulation.
When we went to see Doc. Teur, he introduced us to Buddy. Buddy was very small, so I asked Doc. Teur how Buddy could help me. Doc. Teur explained that Buddy was a special little medical device that would stay with me all the time and sends signals to my brain to help with my seizures.

Thanks to Buddy's signals, the number of seizures I suffered could be reduced and sometimes be blocked altogether. Buddy could even make my seizures milder and shorter, and I could also recover more quickly after a seizure.

Doc. Teur explained he would put Buddy under my skin, just below my left shoulder, where he would be nice and safe. Buddy would be connected by a very thin wire to my left vagus nerve* in my neck. This way Buddy could send me his signals.

* Communication channel that sends information from body to brain
I asked Doc. Teur how I could have Buddy stay with me. Doc. Teur told me that I would need a short surgical procedure, because Buddy needs to stay with me all the time to help me.

When I was in hospital for the procedure, I was worried it might hurt, but Doc. Teur gave me something that made me fall asleep. I didn’t feel a thing!
After I woke up from the procedure, it hurt a bit but not for long. Doc. Teur gave me a tablet to stop the pain.

All I could see from the procedure were two small scars: one where Buddy is, and one on the left-hand side of my neck where my vagus nerve is. After a little while, you’ll hardly be able to see those at all.

I went home the day after.
Two weeks later, I went back to see Doc. Teur. He used a special device to check Buddy and the signals he was sending out. Over the next few weeks, I had to go and see him a couple times more to check if Buddy was working OK.

What happens afterwards?
Doc. Teur also gave me special magnets! I can use these to send extra signals to Buddy. If I think there is a seizure coming on, I can move the special magnet over Buddy. Or if I’m having a seizure, someone else can do it for me.

The special magnets may stop or shorten my seizure and may help me to recover more quickly. My magnet can also stop side effects when I need it.
I didn’t have fewer seizures right away – it took a while, but the longer I have Buddy, the better it gets.

When Buddy sends out his signals, it makes my voice a bit croaky, but that only lasts for a couple of seconds. That was strange to start with, but I’m used to it now.

When I first got Buddy, my throat was a bit sore, but that soon passed. Now I only cough sometimes and maybe have a shortness of breath. Not everyone feels the same.

What to expect with VNS Therapy?
I’ve had Buddy with me for a year now and I feel much better. I have fewer seizures and they’re much milder than they used to be. I can even go to school now and play with my friends... Buddy has helped me a lot and I really like having him with me all the time!
Search for the six differences
For you to colour
VNS THERAPY EUROPEAN INDICATION FOR USE

VNS Therapy is indicated for use as an adjunctive therapy in reducing the frequency of seizures in patients whose epileptic disorder is dominated by partial seizures (with or without secondary generalization) or generalized seizures that are refractory to seizure medications. The Model 106 AspireSR® (Seizure Response) features the Automatic Stimulation Mode, which is intended for patients who experience seizures that are associated with cardiac rhythm increases known as ictal tachycardia.

CONTRAINDICATIONS:
The VNS Therapy system cannot be used in patients after a bilateral or left cervical vagotomy. Do not use short-wave diathermy, microwave diathermy, or therapeutic ultrasound diathermy on patients implanted with the VNS Therapy system. Diagnostic ultrasound is not included in this contraindication. Cardiac arrhythmia (Model 106 only)—The AutoStim Mode feature should not be used in patients with clinically meaningful arrhythmias or who are using treatments that interfere with normal intrinsic heart rate responses.

WARNINGS:
Physicians should inform patients about all potential risks and adverse events discussed in the VNS Therapy Physician Manuals, including information that VNS Therapy may not be a cure for epilepsy. Since seizures may occur unexpectedly, patients should consult with a physician before engaging in unsupervised activities, such as driving, swimming, and bathing, or in strenuous sports that could harm them or others. A malfunction of the VNS Therapy system could cause painful or direct current stimulation, which could result in nerve damage. Removal or replacement of the VNS Therapy system requires an additional surgical procedure. Patients who have pre-existing swallowing, cardiac, or respiratory difficulties (including, but not limited to, obstructive sleep apnea and chronic pulmonary disease) should discuss with their physicians whether VNS Therapy is appropriate for them since there is the possibility that stimulation might worsen their condition. Postoperative bradycardia can occur among patients with certain underlying cardiac arrhythmias. MRI can be safely performed; however, special equipment and procedures must be used.

ADVERSE EVENTS:
The most commonly reported side effects from stimulation include hoarseness (voice alteration), paresthesia (prickling feeling in the skin), dyspnea (shortness of breath), sore throat, and increased coughing. The most commonly reported side effect from the implant procedure is infection.

* The information contained here represents partial excerpts of important prescribing information from the product labeling. Patients should discuss the risks and benefits of VNS Therapy with their healthcare provider. Visit www.VNSTherapy.com for more information.

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