

Mayo Clinic News Network

Spine Stimulator for Pain

Intro: Chronic pain. The National Institutes of Health reports that tens of millions of Americans suffer from it. Chronic pain can destroy your quality of life and make even the simplest of tasks unbearable. Experts at Mayo Clinic want to change that. They are using an implantable device that stimulates the spine to reduce pain for some people. Reporter Vivien Williams takes us into the OR to learn more about this method of pain relief.

Video	Audio
Voice of Vivien Williams VO: David Mauck, M.D. and team in surgery	This is a big day for Julie Williams. Pain Medicine Specialist, Dr. David Mauck is implanting a device into her spine. The goal is to reduce chronic, debilitating pain.
Julie Williams (00:45) Had chronic pain	"I'd had a back surgery when I was 25 for a disk and I had pain down my left leg at that time."
Voice of Vivien Williams VO: surgery video	The pain went away. Until about a year ago.
Julie Williams (2:21)	"It was down my left leg into my left foot and it was -- gosh, sometimes 9 out of 10, burning, mainly a burning pain."
Voice of Vivien Williams VO: to surgery video to b-roll of Julie working with Dr. Gay	Julie's pain got so bad it interfered with work as a physician's assistant. Medication only masked it. The pain was wrecking her quality of life.
David Mauck, M.D (00:42) Mayo Clinic anesthesiology	"This is what the device looks like."
Voice of Vivien Williams VO: surgery	Dr. Mauck says the spine stimulator emits electrical impulses.
David Mauck, M.D. (00:48)	"Think of it as a pacemaker for the spine."
Voice of Vivien Williams	During the procedure he and his team first

VO: surgery video to animation	place a temporary device at the level of the spinal cord where the nerves are that generate the pain. It gives off small electrical signals that mute what patients feel. Instead of pain they feel a pleasant buzzing sensation in the affected area.
Voice of Vivien Williams VO: from animation to surgery	To make sure it's in the right place, the surgical team briefly wakes up the patient.
Julie Williams (8:04)	"They woke me up and I could feel that it was affecting the area that was painful and so then, you know, they sewed up the incisions and took me to the recovery room."
David Mauck, M.D. (10:26) Mayo Clinic anesthesiology	"If they get good relief -- and that typically means 50 to 80 percent improvement, then we can come back at a later date and put this in permanently."
Voice of Vivien Williams VO: Julie at work	Julie has had her permanent device implanted for some time now, and she says she feels great.
Julie Williams (12:40)	"And honestly, it's so weird because I -- I forget about it. I forgot how bad the pain is and then all of the sudden I'll remember and I'm, like, oh, my gosh, this is amazing! So I'm not just saying this for the camera. It's the truth."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Julie still feels pain sometimes in her hip or leg, but it is much, much less than what she experienced before. And if it bothers her, she can turn up the amount of stimulation, which decreases the pain.
Julie Williams (4:13)	"I'd say between 80 and 90 percent of the pain is gone."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Now she's back at work and back at life. For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Vivien Williams.

Anchor tag:

Dr. Mauck says this device is not right for all people with chronic pain. But for patients like Julie, the spine stimulator may greatly improve quality of life.

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