

how is axonics therapy done

Axonics therapy is an innovative treatment option for individuals suffering from various types of bladder and bowel control issues, including overactive bladder (OAB) and fecal incontinence. The therapy involves the use of a small device that alters the signals between the brain and the nerves controlling these organs, thereby improving their function. This article explores how Axonics therapy is performed, its benefits, and what patients can expect throughout the process.

Understanding Axonics Therapy

Axonics therapy, also known as sacral neuromodulation, is a minimally invasive procedure that uses a small implantable device to stimulate the sacral nerves. These nerves play a crucial role in bladder and bowel control. By sending mild electrical impulses to these nerves, the therapy can help regulate bladder and bowel function, reduce urgency, and improve overall quality of life for patients.

Indications for Axonics Therapy

Before proceeding with Axonics therapy, it is essential to determine whether the treatment is appropriate for the patient. The therapy is typically recommended for individuals who:

1. Experience symptoms of overactive bladder, such as:
 - Frequent urination
 - Urgency
 - Incontinence
2. Suffer from fecal incontinence, characterized by:
 - Involuntary leakage of stool
 - Urgency to have a bowel movement
3. Have not found relief from other conservative treatments, such as:
 - Lifestyle changes
 - Medications
 - Physical therapy

Pre-Procedure Assessment

Before undergoing Axonics therapy, patients must undergo a comprehensive evaluation to ensure they are suitable candidates. This assessment typically includes:

- **Medical History Review:** The physician will review the patient's medical history, including any previous treatments and current symptoms.
- **Physical Examination:** A physical examination will help identify any underlying health issues that may impact the procedure's success.
- **Diagnostic Tests:** Patients may undergo urodynamic studies or other tests to assess bladder function and determine the severity of their condition.

The Axonics Therapy Procedure

The Axonics therapy procedure involves several key steps, from initial consultation to device implantation.

1. Consultation with a Specialist

The first step is to consult with a healthcare provider specializing in bladder and bowel disorders. This specialist will provide information about the procedure, discuss potential risks and benefits, and answer any questions the patient may have.

2. Trial Period

Before implantation, most patients undergo a trial period to assess how well the therapy works for them. This trial involves:

- **Temporary Lead Placement:** The physician will insert a temporary lead (a small wire) near the sacral nerve in the lower back, typically done under local anesthesia. This lead is connected to an external stimulator that the patient will wear for a few days.
- **Monitoring Symptoms:** During the trial period (usually 3-7 days), patients will monitor their symptoms, keeping track of any improvements in bladder or bowel control.
- **Evaluation of Results:** After the trial period, the physician will evaluate the results. If the patient experiences significant improvement, they can proceed to the permanent implantation of the Axonics device.

3. Permanent Device Implantation

If the trial is successful, the next step is the permanent implantation of the Axonics device. This procedure involves:

- **Preparation:** The patient is taken to a surgical suite, where they receive either local anesthesia with sedation or general anesthesia, depending on the physician's recommendation and the patient's preference.
- **Incision and Placement:** The surgeon makes a small incision in the lower back to access the sacral nerve. A small device, about the size of a matchstick, is then implanted under the skin in the upper buttock area.
- **Connecting the Lead:** The lead is connected to the implanted device, which will stimulate the sacral nerve with mild electrical impulses.
- **Closure:** The incision is closed, and the patient is monitored in a recovery area before being discharged.

Post-Procedure Care

After the Axonics therapy procedure, patients will receive specific post-operative care instructions to ensure a smooth recovery:

- **Activity Restrictions:** Patients should avoid strenuous activities, heavy lifting, and swimming for a few weeks following the procedure.
- **Follow-Up Appointments:** Regular follow-up appointments are essential to monitor the device's function and the patient's symptoms. The physician may adjust the settings of the device to optimize results.
- **Signs of Complications:** Patients should be aware of signs of infection or complications, such as increased pain, swelling, or fever, and report these to their healthcare provider immediately.

Benefits of Axonics Therapy

Axonics therapy offers several benefits for those suffering from bladder and bowel control issues:

- **Minimally Invasive:** The procedure is less invasive than traditional surgical options, resulting in shorter recovery times and less postoperative pain.
- **Reduced Symptoms:** Many patients experience significant improvements in symptoms, such as reduced urgency and incontinence, leading to a better quality of life.
- **Reversible:** If necessary, the device can be turned off or removed without long-term consequences.
- **Long-lasting Results:** Many patients enjoy long-term relief from their symptoms, with the device's battery lasting up to 15 years before needing replacement.

Conclusion

In summary, Axonics therapy is an effective treatment option for individuals struggling with overactive bladder and fecal incontinence. The procedure involves a comprehensive evaluation, a trial period, and a minimally invasive implantation of a device that stimulates the sacral nerves. With its numerous benefits and potential for long-lasting symptom relief, Axonics therapy presents a promising solution for those seeking to regain control over their bladder and bowel functions. If you or someone you know is considering this therapy, consulting with a specialized healthcare provider can provide valuable insights and guidance on the best course of action.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Axonics therapy and how does it work?

Axonics therapy is a neuromodulation treatment designed to relieve symptoms of bladder and bowel dysfunction. It works by delivering electrical impulses to the sacral nerves, which helps to regulate bladder and bowel function.

What is the procedure for getting Axonics therapy?

The procedure typically involves two main steps: first, a trial phase where a temporary device is implanted to assess the effectiveness of the therapy, followed by a permanent device implantation if the trial is successful.

Is the Axonics therapy procedure painful?

Most patients report minimal discomfort during the procedure, which is usually performed under local anesthesia. Post-procedure recovery may involve some soreness, but this typically subsides quickly.

How long does the Axonics therapy procedure take?

The entire Axonics therapy procedure usually takes about 30 minutes to an hour for the initial implantation, and the trial phase can last from several days to a few weeks, depending on patient response.

What are the side effects or risks associated with Axonics therapy?

Common side effects may include temporary pain at the implant site, changes in bowel or bladder function, and in rare cases, infection or device malfunction. It's important to discuss potential risks with a healthcare provider before proceeding.

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