

# Referring patients for TMS treatment

A guide for GPs and Psychiatrists on accessing outpatient Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation in the UK



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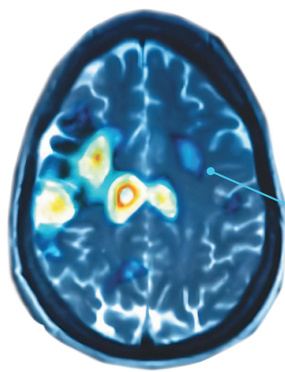
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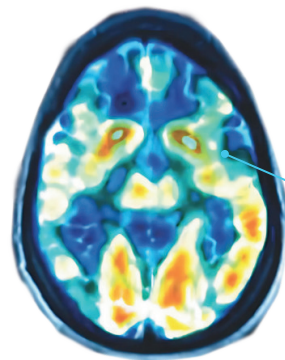
# What is TMS treatment?

## Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS)

Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) is a non-invasive neurostimulation technique that uses focused magnetic pulses to modulate neural activity in specific areas of the brain involved in mood, anxiety, and attention. It is delivered using a magnetic coil placed over the scalp, typically targeting the left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex for depression.



An MRI scan of a brain **with Depression**



An MRI scan of a brain **without Depression**

### How it works

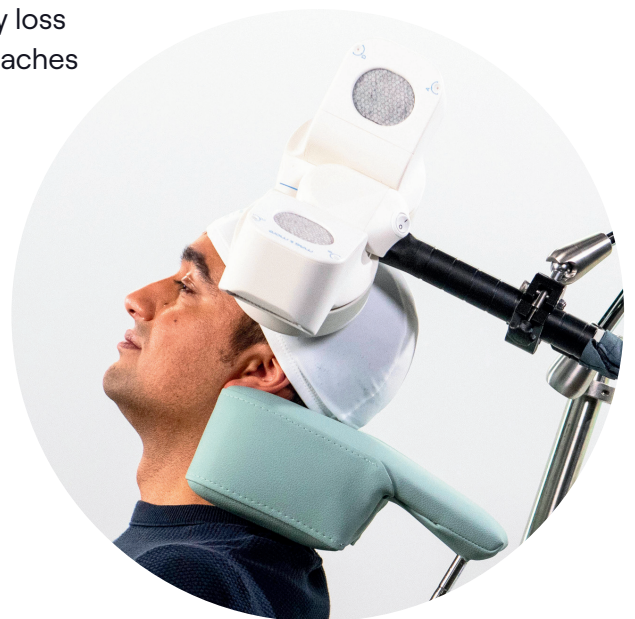
- TMS induces small electrical currents in cortical neurons, enhancing or inhibiting brain activity in targeted networks.
- The effects are local and network-driven, allowing modulation of dysfunctional circuits without systemic side effects.
- Unlike ECT, TMS does not require anaesthesia and does not induce seizures.

### Treatment Protocol

- Sessions are delivered outpatient, typically daily over 4–6 weeks.
- Each session lasts around 20–30 minutes (longer for OCD protocols).
- A full course includes 20–30 sessions, depending on condition and response.



	Anti-depressants	ECT (‘Electroshock’ Therapy)	TMS
NICE approved	✓	✓	✓
Non-invasive	✓	✗	✓
Side-effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Diarrhoea</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Headache</li> <li>• Increased appetite</li> <li>• Migraine</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Nervousness</li> <li>• Sleep problems</li> <li>• Sexual dysfunction</li> <li>• Weight gain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Disorientation</li> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Intense sleepiness</li> <li>• Jaw ache</li> <li>• Anaesthetic complications</li> <li>• Memory loss</li> <li>• Muscle aches</li> <li>• Nausea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mild headache</li> <li>• Mild fatigue</li> <li>• (Seizure risk 0.0002%)</li> </ul>



### Common reasons why patients seek TMS treatment

- ✓ Clinically shown to reduce symptoms within weeks, with lasting benefits for some patients
- ✓ Non-invasive with a low side-effect profile
- ✓ Outpatient treatment – no hospitalisation required



Backed by an extensive body of research, TMS is widely approved and integrated into public and private healthcare systems globally, with regulatory approvals including FDA (US), TGA (Australia), Health Canada, and NICE (UK).



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# Guidelines for TMS in the UK

## NICE Guidance for the treatment of Depression

Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS) is a non-invasive treatment for depression that has not responded to conventional therapies. In the UK, TMS is supported by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) under Interventional Procedures Guidance IPG542. NICE acknowledges both the safety and clinical acceptability of TMS when delivered under standard protocols, furthermore, NICE recognises the potential for sustained benefit in appropriate patients:

*"Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) is a non-invasive method of stimulating the brain using magnetic pulses. It is used in the treatment of depression that has not responded to other treatments." - NICE IPG542*

*"The evidence on repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) for depression shows no major safety concerns and the procedure can be used with normal arrangements for clinical governance, consent and audit." - NICE IPG542*

*"In some studies, patients showed sustained improvement in symptoms over several weeks or months." - NICE IPG542*

### Indication: Treatment-Resistant Depression

TMS is generally considered when symptoms have not responded to two or more antidepressant trials, psychological therapies, or when such treatments are poorly tolerated. This positions TMS as a valid next step in stepped care for patients with moderate to severe, treatment-resistant depression.

*"[TMS] is usually considered when symptoms have not responded to antidepressant medication or psychological therapy, or when treatment is not well tolerated." - NICE IPG542*

### Learn more

For the full NICE Interventional Procedures Guidance [IPG542], visit:  
[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg542](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg542)



### Smart TMS clinical governance & practice standards

At our clinics, TMS is delivered under robust clinical governance protocols, including:

- Consultant-led assessment
- Standardised outcome monitoring (e.g. PHQ-9, GAD-7)
- Shared care communication with referring clinicians
- Continuous audit of efficacy and safety

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# Eligibility criteria for TMS treatment



## General Inclusion Criteria

Patients should meet all of the following:

- Aged 14 years or older
- Primary diagnosis of a mental health condition for which TMS is supported by clinical evidence (see page 13)
- Have experienced inadequate response or poor tolerability to at least two standard treatments (e.g., antidepressants, CBT)
- Medically stable and able to attend regular outpatient sessions
- Able to provide informed consent and engage with treatment



## Exclusion Criteria

TMS is not appropriate for patients with:

- Uncontrolled epilepsy or seizure disorder
- Metallic implants or devices in or near the head (e.g., cochlear implants, aneurysm clips)
- Current or recent history of psychosis or mania (excluding stable bipolar depression)
- Severe cognitive impairment or inability to follow instructions
- Recent substance misuse disorder without stabilisation



## Concurrent Medication Use

- Patients can remain on any prescribed psychiatric medications during TMS
- TMS is often delivered alongside psychotherapy or other treatments as part of a shared care approach

### Referral support

If unsure about a patient's suitability, our clinical team is happy to review the case or provide a pre-referral discussion.



0345 222 5678



[refer@smarttms.co.uk](mailto:refer@smarttms.co.uk)

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# Conditions treated with TMS

See page 13 for references



## Depression

Remission rates up to 55% in TRD; large-scale audits and studies support efficacy; NICE approved (IPG542).

References 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10



## OCD

Systematic review showed significant improvements; 30% remission, 55% clinical response after failed medications/therapy.

References 11, 12, 13



## Anxiety

Clinical audits show 75% report improved quality of life; early response often within 15 sessions; some patients may not respond.

References 20, 21



## Addiction

TMS reduced cravings and substance use across multiple studies; sustained benefit observed; no serious adverse effects reported.

References 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19



## Postnatal Depression

4-week course achieved remission in 8 of 9 patients; remission sustained at 6-month follow-up without medications

Reference 24



## Insomnia

2023 study showed 25% increase in sleep time; improved REM sleep; superior to medication and CBT for long-term outcomes.

Reference 27



## ADHD

Meta-analysis of 5 RCTs (n=189) showed rTMS significantly improves sustained attention and processing speed in ADHD, with moderate effect sizes.

Reference 25, 26



## Trauma / PTSD

Meta-analyses report large effect sizes (1.13–1.44); 66% symptom reduction in clinical trials; superior to some pharmacological options.

Reference 21, 22, 23



## Bipolar Disorder

TMS is effective for bipolar depression, with higher response rates to left-sided stimulation. It is not used for treating manic episodes.

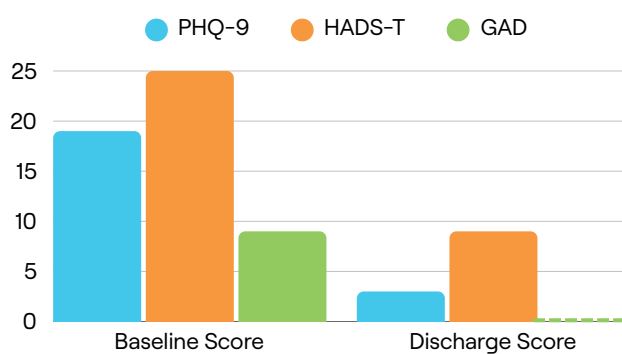
Reference 29, 30, 31

# Case studies

## Mid-to-Late 50s Female with Major Depression – Smart TMS Clinic St Albans

Full course of treatment administered (20 sessions)

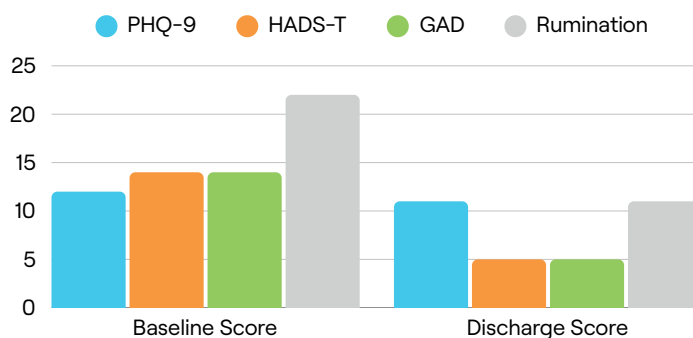
Suffered from Major Depression for 20 years. Noticed a positive response to treatment after only 6 sessions, with PHQ-9 score reducing from 19 to 8 within first week of TMS treatment. Upon completion of treatment course, mood had drastically improved, and all anxiety symptoms were absent.



## Mid-30s Female with Major Depression – Smart TMS Clinic London

Full course of treatment administered (30 sessions)

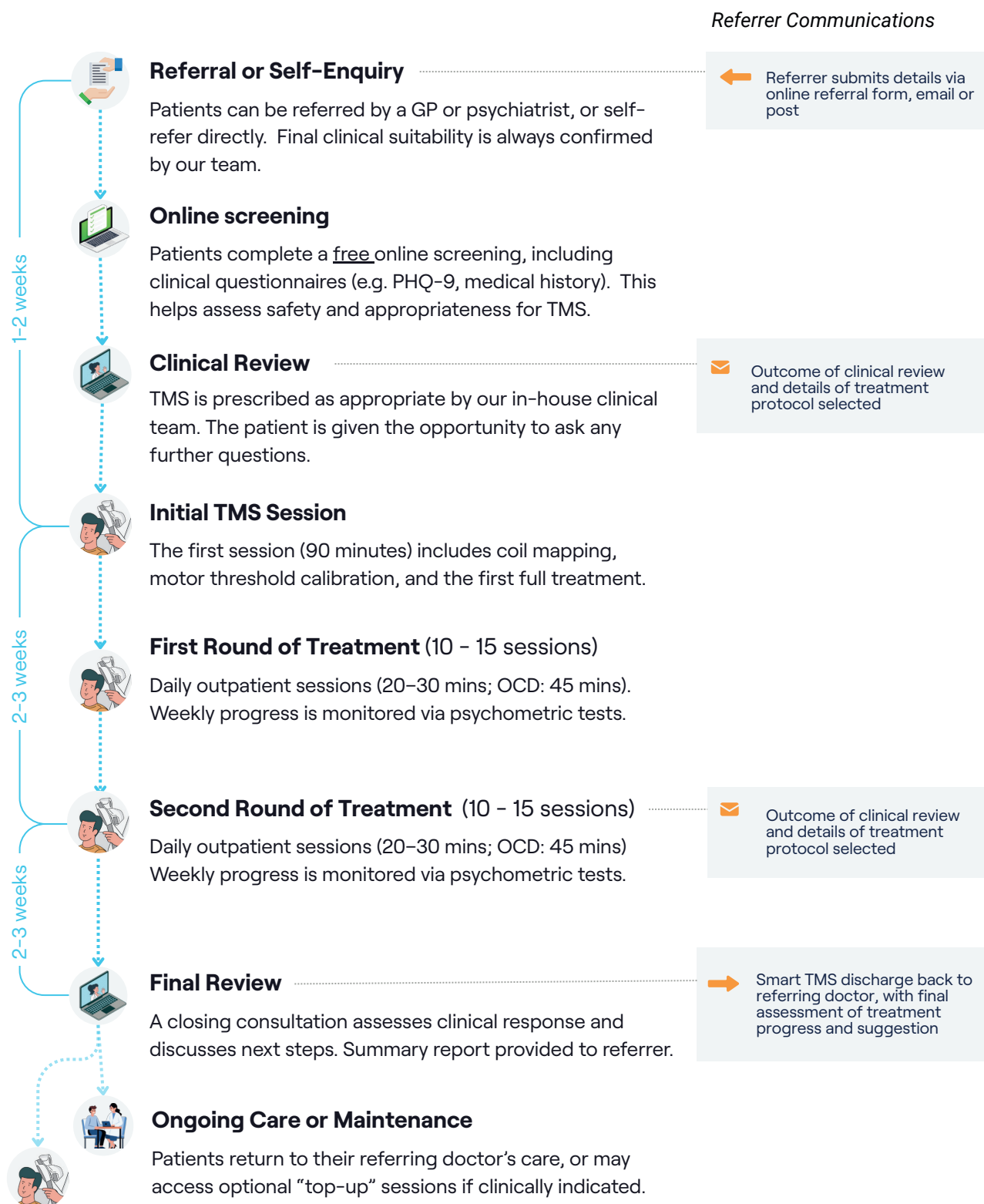
After 15 sessions, mood improved significantly. After 30 sessions, patient reported feeling much happier with more motivation and was very pleased with the outcome of TMS.



**In Smart TMS clinics, 72% of patients experience a clinically meaningful response to TMS treatment, with 56% achieving remission**

Based on internal outcome monitoring across routine practice.  
Smart TMS Clinical Data and Patient Outcomes (Internal Report, 2024).

# Referral & treatment steps



In some cases, intensive sessions (multiple sessions per day) are offered to help patients get through treatment in a shorter space of time.



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# How to refer

Please mention your patients pre-conditions, any formal diagnosis and medication history. Your patient will then be triaged to a suitable clinician and a TMS practitioner in their region.



## Online Form

Visit  
**[www.smarttms.co.uk/online-referral/](http://www.smarttms.co.uk/online-referral/)**  
or scan the QR code



## Email

Write to  
**[refer@smarttms.co.uk](mailto:refer@smarttms.co.uk)**



## Post

Please address referral letters with attention to:  
**Patient Care Team, Smart TMS**  
**9 Cirencester Office Park**  
**Tetbury Road, Cirencester**  
**Gloucestershire, GL7 6JJ**

## Managing patient expectations

### How much does TMS cost?

TMS treatment with private providers like Smart TMS usually involves some cost. We'll help check if private insurance can cover treatment. The number of sessions varies by condition. For full cost details, patients can contact the Smart TMS Patient Care team on **0345 222 5678**. While TMS has upfront costs, it may reduce long-term expenses from medication and hospital stays.

### Can I get TMS through the NHS?

Only a limited number of NHS Foundation Trusts offer TMS for depression, typically in inpatient settings, with strict eligibility criteria and often lengthy waiting times. Private TMS providers such as Smart TMS clinics offer an alternative for patients seeking quicker access to treatment in an outpatient setting, and depending on the patient's coverage, costs may be covered by private health insurance.

**TMS is covered by all major Private Insurance Providers in the UK**



Allianz

helix



AVIVA



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# Professional insights



"Having worked in psychiatry for over 20 years, it is no exaggeration to say that rTMS treatment has revolutionised the way professionals think about treating patients suffering from severe depression. Resetting the brain patterns goes to the root of the problem without flooding the body with chemicals.

It's been a privilege to see patients open up and start to smile again. As the course of treatment progresses there's more interaction and laughter and we're able to meet the person who has been trapped by depression for many years."

**Dr Leigh Neal**

MB BCh MRCGP DRCOG FRCPsych MD,  
Medical Director of Smart TMS



"I have found TMS to be an invaluable tool, especially for depressed patients who had proven to be therapy-resistant to medication and psychotherapy before coming to us. For them, rTMS is often the last option before they have to consider invasive ECT treatments with sometimes severe side effects.

Some of these patients had been suffering from depression for more than 20 to 30 years, and it's wonderful to see them react and improve. I have also used rTMS successfully on patients with OCD, pain, and motor stroke. Even a complex symptom like depersonalisation reacted positively to rTMS. One of the best things about rTMS is that it has no severe side effects and patients don't develop treatment resistance and tolerance effects. If patients have proven to respond to the treatment, they will respond again if they experience a relapse."

**Drs. Joris van Neijenhof**

Clinical (Neuro)Psychologist & Clinical-Training Supervisor.  
neurocare clinics Netherlands

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# About Smart TMS clinics

**The UK's most experienced network of TMS clinics, together with a global leader in neuromodulation.**

Since NICE approved Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) for depression in 2015, **Smart TMS** has been a leading provider across the UK and Ireland, with a network of 10 clinics dedicated to delivering this evidence-based intervention. Through a structured shared care model, **Smart TMS** collaborates with referring clinicians to provide a hospital-free treatment pathway, particularly for patients seeking a non-pharmacological option for conditions such as treatment-resistant depression, OCD, anxiety and addiction.

**Smart TMS** is now part of the **neurocare group**, a best-practice platform in neuromodulation, offering advanced technologies in neurostimulation and EEG and internationally recognised professional training. This partnership supports healthcare professionals in the safe and effective delivery of TMS and aims to advance both clinical understanding and accessibility of this intervention within psychiatric practice in the UK and worldwide.



## How Smart TMS works with the NHS

Our goal is to help expand safe, evidence-based access to TMS across the UK. Our experienced team supports several NHS hospital groups with clinical training and development of TMS services. If you are part of an NHS service and you are interested in offering TMS to your patients, write to [info@smarttms.co.uk](mailto:info@smarttms.co.uk) for further information..

# Training & professional development opportunities

SmartTMS<sup>®</sup>

## Learn how to prescribe for TMS appropriately

Will your patients benefit from a medication-free approach with TMS Therapy? Join our free 1:1 **'Introduction to TMS'** training to learn more about patient suitability and referral pathways.



Live Online Format



4-hours



## TMS in Depression, OCD & New Developments: Full Theory and Practical Training

A world first online training course in TMS, with optional hands-on follow up.

The **neurocare academy** offers a **2-part** (self-paced) online and practical training course for healthcare professionals looking to use and administer TMS in their own clinical setting.

1.



Self-Paced Online Format



6-hours

2.



Practical Hands-on Workshop



4-hours

Internationally recognised training



To learn more about training opportunities in TMS in the UK, scan the QR code or visit [www.smarttms.co.uk/professional-training/](http://www.smarttms.co.uk/professional-training/)



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