

Biofeedback

What is biofeedback?

Biofeedback is a therapy that trains you to be aware of your body and how it works. Your body controls your heart rate, blood pressure, and skin temperature without you thinking about it. You can learn to control some of your body processes with biofeedback. This may help reduce stress and give you more control over your health.

When is it used?

Biofeedback may be used to help treat:

- Tension headaches
- Chronic back or neck pain
- High blood pressure
- Anxiety disorders
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Grinding of the teeth

Along with medical care, biofeedback can be helpful for:

- Migraine headaches
- Depression
- Asthma
- TMJ (jaw joint) problems
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Chronic fatigue syndrome

What happens during a therapy session?

Your therapist will connect you to electronic equipment that gives you information about your body functions. The equipment gives feedback that you can see on a screen or hear with beeps or tones. The feedback tells you what is happening with your body functions. During the treatment sessions you will be asked to relax and pay attention to how you feel and how your feelings change the feedback.

There are 3 common types of biofeedback:

- **Thermal biofeedback:** Small pads or clips are attached to your hand or foot to measure skin temperature. Skin temperature is a good way to tell how tense or relaxed you are. When you are relaxed, the skin temperature of your hands and feet rises.
- **Electromyogram (EMG) biofeedback:** Small pads are put on your skin of the neck, back, or forehead to measure muscle activity.
- **Electroencephalogram (EEG) biofeedback:** One or more small pads are placed on your scalp. They measure electrical activity in the brain.

It may take between 6 and 30 therapy sessions to teach you how to control your symptoms. You may need to practice relaxation or muscle control between biofeedback sessions. This helps you get more out of your treatment sessions. After you finish treatment, you may need occasional "booster" sessions to help keep the control you have learned.

How do I find a therapist?

Ask questions and get referrals from people you know and trust. You could check with:

- Your healthcare provider
- Friends or family members who have used biofeedback
- Your health insurance company
- Your employee assistance program (EAP) at work
- Local mental health or human service agencies
- Professional associations of psychologists, psychiatrists, or counselors

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