

Having vacuum assisted closure (VAC) therapy to help your wound heal

Information for service users, their families and carers



If you have any questions or concerns contact your community nurses via the Single Point of Access (SPA) on 0300 300 7777

What is vacuum assisted closure (VAC) therapy?

You have been given this leaflet because it has been suggested that VAC therapy may help your wound to heal.

VAC stands for vacuum assisted closure therapy. It is a special system for treating wounds that could help speed up healing or manage your symptoms better. It is also known as 'VAC' or 'negative pressure wound therapy' (NPWT).

Why do I need this treatment?

There are several reasons for this:

- drain excess fluid from the wound
- clean the wound more effectively
- prevent infection
- keep your wound moist and warm
- help heal the wound from the bottom up and over
- increase blood flow to your wound
- reduce redness and swelling (inflammation)
- help the wound heal faster . This will help to reduce your stay if you are in hospital.

What does it do?

The VAC system has several parts to it. It applies a vacuum to your wound.

- During treatment, a special foam or gauze dressing is placed into your wound.
- An adhesive film then covers this and seals the dressing and the wound. The cover is known as drape.
- Your healthcare professional may also advise a dressing to line the wound if infection is present and/or if the tissue is fragile.
- If your wound is over a bony area or your bottom, the dressing would be extended across to a suitable location, so you are not sitting/lying on the tubing.
- A drainage tube is stuck over a hole in the adhesive film. This connects to the portable vacuum pump. This pump creates a suction effect on the wound all the time which can help wounds heal more quickly. The canister collects the excess fluid from your wound helping to keep your skin and clothing dry.
- During the therapy, you will need to carry the pump with you wherever you go.
- If you are in a community hospital, you may be able to go home with a pump depending on your circumstances.

The VAC machine is on for 24 hours a day.

Does it hurt?

You might feel a slight sucking in or drawing sensation when the machine is first switched on.

Are there any side effects/risks?

Sometimes the wound may become tender or itch as it heals. This is usually a good sign but if it carries on please speak to your nurse or doctor. Please note it is normal for wound fluid to have some blood present in it. Bleeding from the wound may occur, if this happens you must let nursing staff or community nurses know straight away.

Can I have a bath or shower?

No. The drape may become loose if it gets wet and lose its seal. However, it may be possible that a shower can be planned to suit with dressing changes. Speak with your nurse to see if this is possible.

How often does the dressing need to be changed?

Your dressing will be changed two times a week by a nurse who is trained in VAC therapy. You will be reviewed by a Tissue Viability Nurse Specialist every 2-4 weeks to ensure that the therapy is still appropriate to continue. The nursing team will liaise with the Tissue Viability Service between reviews if required.

Will my mobility be restricted?

No. You will be supplied with an Activac unit that has a battery life of 10 hours. It has its own carry case that can be hung over your shoulder when moving around.

If you are in a community hospital, education would be given to you before your discharge and support would be given by the community nurses who would continue the dressing changes at home.

How many hours a day does it need to be on?

The machine needs to be on for 24 hours a day. The machine is best left plugged into the mains electricity when you are not moving around to keep the battery fully charged. The machine must always be kept turned on so that the therapy works.

What happens if the machine fails or is switched off?

If you are at home, you will be given training by the nurse on how to deal with simple problems.

If you are at home and for any reason the problem cannot be solved or the machine has been switched off for more than two hours then you must always contact the Single Point of Access Service (SPA) on **0300 300 7777**.

Simple troubleshooting guide for community patients

The machine may alarm for 4 common reasons:

1. The canister is full and needs changing– change canister.
2. The tubing is blocked– change canister (if still blocked call SPA **0300 300 7777**)
3. The battery is low– plug in as soon as possible.
4. The drape has come unstuck – try patching the area with spare drape. Your nurse will show you or a relative or carer how to do this after applying the dressing.

Always contact SPA on **0300 300 7777** if the machine is turned off for more than two hours.

Changing the canister

1. Stop V.A.C.® Therapy by pressing on the



DO NOT turn power Off to the ACTIV.A.C.™ Therapy Unit.

2. Slide both tubing clamps toward the tubing connector.



3. Close both clamps.

4. Twist and separate tubing connectors.

5. Depress the Canister Latch Release.



6. Remove the canister from the therapy unit. Dispose of the canister according to institution requirements or local regulations.

7. Install the new canister on the therapy unit. An audible "click" should be heard when the canister is properly installed.



8. If properly installed, the canister cannot be removed by gently pulling the canister directly away from the unit.

9. Reconnect the dressing tubing.

10. Open both tubing clamps.

Start V.A.C.® Therapy by pressing on the



Touch Screen User Interface.

DO NOT turn power Off to the ACTIV.A.C.™ Therapy Unit.

The 3M/KCI 24 hour helpline number is 0800 980 8880 option 1 if you need any advice about changing the canister or advice about the machine alarming. They are the company who supply the VAC machines for Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust. If 3M/KCI cannot help then contact the community nurses on **0300 300 7777** within two hours of the problem starting.

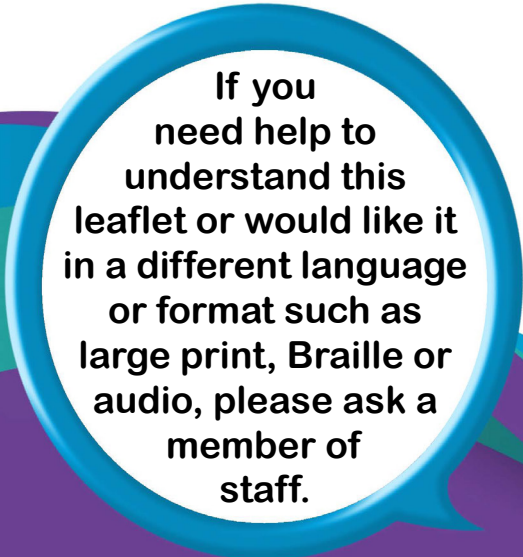
If a problem occurs, the community nurse that visits you may not always be able to solve the problem. They may remove the VAC dressing and dress your wound with a normal dressing without the therapy until it can be reapplied. This is perfectly safe.

If you are admitted into hospital please remember to take the charger for the machine, the hard black carry case and any dressings we may give you.

Who collects my pump when it is no longer needed?

If the pump is no longer required, please ensure the nurse who removes the pump takes the machine, the case and charger away with them.

Space for notes



If you need help to understand this leaflet or would like it in a different language or format such as large print, Braille or audio, please ask a member of staff.

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