

Care should be taken not to lie on the tubing that leads from your wound to the pump as this may make your skin sore. You need to be careful when getting into and out of bed and moving around as the VAC unit may be plugged in (to re-charge) and the tubing is quite long. The smaller VAC unit has a carrying case which may make it easier to move around with the unit.

What happens if the VAC machine alarms?

The pump has both audio and visual alarms, which tell you what the problem is and most are easily solved. This is something your nurse can explain in more detail.

Can I use the VAC machine at home?

Yes, this may be possible. There is a small version of the VAC pump which may be suitable for your continued use following discharge. We either arrange for the District Nurse to change the VAC dressings or they may be changed in our outpatient clinic.

What are the benefits of having VAC therapy?

Fluid loss from the wound is controlled allowing you to be more comfortable and keeping your skin and clothes dry.

An increased blood supply is achieved through the sucking action. This helps the wound to heal more rapidly as there is an increased supply of oxygen and the cells that are needed for wound healing going to the area.

There is evidence that there is less likelihood of the wound becoming infected as the VAC is a sealed system.

What are the risks involved in the therapy?

There is a minimal risk of some bleeding from the wound, particularly if you are receiving treatment which affects the clotting of your blood. If you have recently had heart surgery, or surgery on blood vessels, or are on blood thinners, you may have a higher risk of bleeding, whether you are using VAC Therapy or not.

If you see a sudden increase or a large amount of blood from your wound in the tubing or canister let the nurse know straight away.

If you are at home: turn the therapy unit OFF right away and apply pressure over the area. Do not remove your dressing. Contact the hospital, either the Tissue Viability Nurse or the ward where you have been discharged from and we will advise you on what to do next.

What will happen if I don't have this treatment? What are the alternatives?

Alternative wound dressings can be used but they may not be able to deal with the amount of fluid leaking from your wound and healing may not be as rapid.

For further information visit:

www.lhch.nhs.uk

If you require a copy of this leaflet in any other format or language please contact us quoting the leaflet code and the language or format you require.

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Vacuum Assisted Closure (VAC) Therapy



Specialised form of treatment for wound healing

Excellent, Compassionate and Safe care for **every patient**, every day

This leaflet has been written to provide information about Vacuum Assisted Closure (VAC) Therapy. We hope it answers some of the questions or concerns you may have however it is not intended to replace talking with your doctors or nursing staff.

What is V.A.C. Therapy?

The VAC is a specialised form of wound healing treatment. It applies suction to your wound through a sterile piece of foam into the wound, which is held in place with VAC drape (a clear sticky dressing). A plastic tube is attached to the foam and connected to the VAC machine via a sealed plastic container. The VAC works by sucking all the excess fluid out of the wound and this suction provides a better blood supply to the healing tissue. This means that your surrounding skin is kept dry and that more oxygen and other cells needed for wound healing are taken quickly to the area where healing needs to occur.

VAC Therapy is delivered by an integrated therapy system using four main components:

- An intelligent therapy unit with a canister to hold fluid
- A special foam dressing
- A TRAC pad with tubing to connect the unit and the foam (TRAC stands for 'Therapeutic Regulated Accurate Care')
- Clear VAC Drape dressing

These can all be seen in the picture below.



How does the V.A.C. Therapy system work?

The foam dressing is placed in or onto the wound. The foam and a few centimetres of the surrounding skin will be covered with clear drape. A hole will be put in the centre of the drape and the TRAC pad will be placed on top of it. The other end of the tubing will be connected to the canister, which is attached to the therapy unit. When the VAC system is in place and the unit is turned on the foam dressing collapses. From then on the system will pull excess fluid and infectious materials from the wound into the canister. This improves blood flow and can reduce swelling, thereby helping the wound to heal.

When you are in hospital the nurse will check the system at regular intervals:

Is the System on? Does it say 'Therapy on'? Are all the clamps open? Has the dressing collapsed down?

How long will the VAC therapy take to improve your wound?

This depends on your general condition and the size and type of your wound. Any questions you have should be directed towards your nurse, doctor or the specialist tissue viability nurse.

Will I feel any pain or discomfort?

Many patients report a mild pulling sensation that tends not to be noticeable after about 15 minutes. As the wound heals it may become tender or itchy, this is normally a good sign but if discomfort persists, please let the doctor or nurse looking after you know.

How long does it take to put on?

It may be that the first time the VAC is applied is in theatre under a general anesthetic or it may be applied on the ward. The time it takes to apply the VAC dressing varies according to the size or complexity of the wound. The doctor or nurse will be able to estimate the amount of time the dressing will take, often no longer than 15 – 20 minutes.

How many hours a day is the VAC left on?

We recommend that the VAC is on 24-hours a day. If any less then your wound will not receive the full benefit of the therapy. The clear VAC Drape is waterproof. You can wash or shower with the dressings in place and with the tube clamped (closed off). Turn off the unit and unplug it from the electrical outlet. Do not take the therapy unit in the bathtub or shower. Whilst you are in hospital though, the nurse will organise this for you, so please do not worry.

How often does the VAC dressing have to be changed?

Normally the dressing is changed every two to three days but this depends on the type of wound that you have.

Will changing the dressing hurt?

Some people do experience slight discomfort during dressing changes, depending on the type and location of the wound. The nursing staff can give you pain relief before the procedure. The discomfort is similar to other dressings. As the wound heals it may become tender or itchy, this is normally a good sign but if discomfort persists, please let the doctor or nurse looking after you know.

How will the dressing look when the system is operating?

The dressing may shrink down or wrinkle slightly as the system operates.

Is VAC Therapy safe?

Yes. VAC Therapy helps more than 30,000 patients every day and has been used on more than one million wounds around the world. The interaction of all VAC Therapy components ensures controlled, consistent and safe therapy.

Can I move around?

One clear goal of V.A.C. Therapy is to keep you as mobile as possible. This depends on the location of the wound and the treatment that has been prescribed. **The device can be disconnected if you need to go to the toilet or have a shower, but for no longer than about 15 minutes.**