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Email: fhft.palsfrimleypark@nhs.net

Wexham Park & Heatherwood Hospitals

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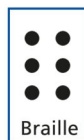
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Translation



Audio



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Title of Leaflet	Topical Negative Pressure (VAC Therapy)				
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Legal Notice

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible. Please therefore always check specific advice or any concerns you may have with your doctor.

Plastic Surgery
Wexham Park Hospital, King Edward VII Hospital

Topical Negative Pressure (VAC Therapy)

What is VAC Therapy?

This is a closed system that can be used on a variety of acute and chronic wounds. VAC is short for vacuum assisted closure.



VAC therapy uses a vacuum, or negative pressure, which not only facilitates wound healing but also

- removes excess fluid
- removes infectious material
- maintains a moist environment
- promotes new skin
- cleans the wound from the inside out, making the wound smaller as it heals

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How does it work?

A sponge (called granufoam) is applied over the wound bed and attached to an electric suction pump. This increases the blood flow around the area, allowing the wound to heal at a faster rate than normal.

The pump is attached to a small canister which collects any debris, excess blood, or serous fluid within the cavity.

This allows the wound to clean and heal from the base through to the surface.



ActiVAC Canister

Is it safe?

Yes.

This is a safe and effective procedure.

Is it painful?

You may experience some discomfort when the dressing is changed, and the therapy begins; the nurse will make sure you are given sufficient pain relief before so this discomfort should not last long after the therapy is started. Everyone has a different pain threshold, so it will not be the same for all patients.

➤ **Leak within the closed system**

You may hear a hissing noise from the dressing, often the leak is around the tubing, use a piece of extra drape to stop the leak.

➤ **Battery low or dead**

Recharge battery by plugging into the mains; the battery lasts for 8 hours.

➤ **Therapy not activated**

Check the on/off button.

If this does not work,

- call your community nurse at your GP surgery.
- or ring the company on 0800 980 8880 (KCI Medical - the company name has recently been changed to

Contact details

KCI Medical 3M customer help line	0800 980 8880
Kamal Paul Clinical lead nurse in Breast and Plastic Surgery	0300 61 53031 0300 615 3127
Tissue Viability Nurses at Wexham Park Hospital	Mobile 07827 283236

When not to use VAC therapy

- cancer in the wound
- untreated deep bone infection
- dead tissue
- fistula (abnormal passage between two organs)
- Exposed abdomen and bowel

How long will I need the pump?

The specialist nurses and doctors will decide how long you need this therapy We will monitor the progress of your wound at each dressing change and advise you accordingly.

Can I go home with the pump?

The clear goal of this therapy is to promote independence and mobility within your own home (keeping you out of hospital). However, this may not always be possible. Some of the contributing factors associated within the decision-making process may include

- clinical diagnosis
- age
- medication
- type and location of wound
- resources available
- management and funding of therapy within the community services
- frequency of change

Are there any alternatives?

VAC therapy is not always considered a suitable option for all, sometimes conventional management with dressings may be more appropriate. This can be discussed in more detail with the doctor or the practitioner managing your wound.

How often will the dressing be changed

The VAC dressing should be changed every 48-72 hours, and no less than 3 times a week for infected wounds.

VAC pumps can be used over flaps and skin grafts after surgery; if this is the case, the dressing may be left for 5-7 days.



Dressings pack

How many hours should the VAC stay on?

The VAC pump should work continuously for 24 hours a day. If the system is off for more than 2 hours, the granufoam (sponge) must be removed and changed. If you are at home, please contact your community nurses and inform them of this.

VAC settings

The VAC setting will be decided by the doctor or the clinical nurse specialist applying the dressing; this will depend upon the individual assessment of the patient.

The two settings are

- continuous
- intermittent

Tips for daily use

- We recommend you remain on VAC therapy continuously until stated otherwise
- The battery on the pump will last for 8 hours
- Keep the machine always charged
- Do not take the machine in the bath or shower
- Full canister indicates that a new one is needed
- The canister should be checked every 4-6 hrs and the contents recorded on a VAC drainage chart
- If there is any excessive exudate or blood loss in the canister the VAC must be stopped **immediately** and
 - you should inform the doctor or the specialist nurse, so they can re-assess your wound; or
 - if you are at home with a pump, please contact your GP (General Practitioner) or community nurses

What happens if the machine alarms go off?

The vac system has both visual and audible alarms.

For your safety, the system will alarm for the following reasons

- **Canister full**
Replace with a new canister if full