

The Acti-V.A.C.TM portable negative pressure dressing system

Department of BESS Surgery Patient information

This leaflet is a guide for anyone having The Acti-V.A.CTM negative pressure system applied.



What is the Acti-V.A.CTM portable negative pressure dressing system?

V.A.C is a system that uses negative pressure to improve wound healing by:

- keeping the wound clean
- reducing tissue swelling and removing fluid build up
- promoting tissue formation
- increasing blood supply to the wound which helps healing

It can lower wound infections and improve healing by up to 50%. It is a portable machine which you wear all the time.

How is it used?

We place a piece of foam into your wound with a seal around it. A tube runs from the foam to the portable vacuum pump machine. You can carry the machine around during the day. At night you can charge the machine by plugging it in. You will need to attend hospital twice a week for wound changes.

What do you need to do with the machine?

The machine needs plugging in at night to charge. We will show you how to do this. It doesn't need anything else. The seal is waterproof so you can wash and shower. Do not get the machine wet.

How long will you use it for?

Your surgical team will check the wound twice weekly and let you know. You may need to use it for some weeks. We will remove it when your wound is small enough.

Why has the Acti-V.A.C system been offered?

We cannot close your wound with stitches. This means it will take longer to heal.

What are the aims and benefits of using the Acti-V.A.C system?

To shorten the length of time it takes for your wound to heal.

What are the possible risks of using the Acti-V.A.C system?

- You may find it painful and may be unable to tolerate it
- You may have an allergic reaction to dressings
- The tube is quite long and can get tangled up
- The machine can make some strange noises or become annoying at night
- You need to come to hospital twice a week to have it checked

What do you do if there is a problem with the machine?

If the machine alarms:

- 1) Check the battery level. If it is low, then insert the charging cable. A full charge takes six hours.
- 2) If the battery level is OK turn off the machine. You can do this by pressing and holding the on/off button for two seconds.
- 3) If it continues to alarm, press and hold the power button for two seconds.
- 4) The machine will then switch off, and you can remove it.

If the dressing becomes dislodged or the tube is pulled out:

- 1) Turn off the machine by pressing and holding the on/off button for two seconds. If the machine doesn't stop press and hold the power button for two seconds.
- 2) You can cover it with a simple dressing. You can find a simple dressing in the carrying case.

Contact the skin cancer advanced nurse practitioner: 0300 019 8073 (Mon-Fri 8-4)

It is not an emergency. If it alarms, it is safe to leave it switched off.

Contact details

If you have any queries please contact your consultant skin surgeon, skin cancer nurse specialists, or skin cancer advanced nurse practitioner.

Consultant skin surgeons:

Your consultant's secretary can be contacted on the following numbers:

Mr Perry: 0300 019 4870

Miss Clark: 0300 019 2616

Miss Pearce: 0300 019 2600

Skin cancer nurse specialists: 0300 019 5205

Skin cancer administrator: 0300 019 5465

Skin cancer advanced nurse practitioner: 0300 019 8073

***The above contacts should be available Monday-Friday, 8-4pm. Evenings and weekends please phone your district nurse, 111 or go to the Emergency Department in an emergency.**

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