

Patient Information for Negative Pressure Wound Therapy

Your doctor has asked your nurse to start you on a machine in an attempt to improve the healing of your wound. This helps wounds heal by delivering negative pressure (a vacuum) to the wound, through special dressings and a therapy machine.

Healing

Negative pressure helps wounds heal by:

- Encouraging the growth of new tissue
- Providing a moist wound healing setting
- Bringing wound edges together
- Removing extra fluid and infectious materials into a special container on the machine

Negative pressure wound therapy also removes the need for daily dressing changes. Wounds being healed with negative pressure therapy are usually changed every 48 to 72 hours. Your nurse will assess how often your dressing needs to be changed at every visit.

When the machine is on you may feel a slight pulling feeling and the dressing material will be squashed under the dressing. You should check your dressing every 2-3 hours to make sure that the dressing material is firm and collapsed.

The machine can be disconnected for showering but **should not be disconnected or turned off for more than 2 hours per day.**

Your nurse will review with you what to do if your machine alarms.

Bleeding

Recent heart surgery, surgery on blood vessels and blood thinners all increase your risk of bleeding. If you notice a sudden increase or large amount of blood from your wound in the tubing and/or container:

1. Turn the machine off right away
2. Do not remove your dressing
3. Apply pressure to the area using a clean towel
4. Call 911

Infection

Wound infection can occur for many reasons and can become severe if left untreated.

Call your nurse if you are experiencing any of the following or if you have been experiencing any of these symptoms and they get worse.

- Fever
- A sore, red, swollen wound
- Redness and itchiness around the wound
- The skin around the wound is warm to touch
- Pus or a bad smell from the wound

When to call your nurse:

1. The machine is running but the dressing is not collapsed or the machine stops running.
2. You feel a numb or tingling feeling around your wound or in your arm or leg closest to the wound.
3. You cannot stop the alarm on the machine.
4. Any signs of infections (see above).

Remember to call 911 if you notice sudden or a large amount of blood in the canister.

Fall Prevention Tips

1. Place the electrical cord so that it is not a tripping hazard. When the machine is off or running on the battery unplug the cord and put it away.
2. Make sure that extra tubing is placed so that it is not a tripping hazard. If you are not sure how to do this, ask your nurse for help.
3. Be aware of doorknobs or other objects that could catch tubing not covered by the dressing.

4. Use extra caution when getting in and out of bed and if possible ask for help.

