

Vacuum-Assisted Wound Closure (VAC®) Therapy®

What is a VAC® therapy?

VAC® is a type of wound dressing. It uses negative pressure to help heal certain types of wounds.

Why do I need VAC® therapy?

If your wound is very large and has not closed with regular treatment, a VAC® may help. VAC® therapy helps bring wound edges together, removes fluid and infectious matter, lessens edema (swelling) and improves blood flow to your wound. It helps your wound make healthy tissue, so it can heal.

How does it work?

A special piece of foam is cut to fit the shape of your wound. The foam covers and protects the wound. It also keeps the wound moist so the wound can heal, and it soaks up drainage. Then a tube is put into the foam. It connects the foam to a small machine (the therapy unit). A large bandage is then put over the wound area. The therapy unit creates suction. This suction pulls drainage and loose tissue out of the wound, and pulls the edges of the wound closer together. The dressing is usually changed every two or three days. But this depends on how much drainage is coming from your wound, and whether there is infection in the wound.

How does VAC® therapy feel?

VAC® therapy is not painful. Most people have a mild pulling sensation when it is started. This feeling usually goes away in a few minutes. It may hurt a little bit when the dressing is changed.

Your wound may itch or feel tender as it heals. This is good! If the itching bothers you, talk with your doctor.

How will I take care of the dressing when I am home?

A trained nurse or technician will put on your VAC® dressing. At home, a nurse will come to change it for you. The nurse will also teach you about your dressing and the machine.

Are there any problems or complications I should know about?

The most common problem is that the seal on the dressing breaks, so that the suction stops working. If this happens, you should call your visiting nurse or your wound care doctor **immediately**.

Call your wound care doctor or go to the emergency room if you have:

- Temperature higher than 101° F
- Increase pain, warmth, redness, swelling or rash around the wound
- A foul smell or pus coming from your wound
- Drainage changes color or appearance (such as clear to cloudy)
- Rapid or sudden increase of blood under the dressing or in the tubing

What else do I need to know?

You should have your VAC® on at least 22 out of 24 hours. You should not disconnect it for more than 2 hours a day.

Your doctor will tell you how much you can move around and if you can shower while you have a VAC® dressing.

What do I do if I have a question?

If you are confused or have a question about your VAC® dressing, please call us at 212.932.4325, at any time. You can also find information at our website: www.ColumbiaWoundHealing.org.

This information is brief and general. It should not be the only source of your information on this health care topic. It is not to be used or relied on for diagnosis or treatment. It does not take the place of instructions from your doctor. Talk to your health care providers before making a health care decision.