What if the machine alarms?
Don’t panic. The VAC is designed with alarms to let us know that it is not working properly at that time. It may be easily solved; the monitor will indicate the nature of the problem. The alarm will sound:

- When the canister is full
- When there is a leak
- When the battery is low
- When the power is on but the therapy unit is not working
- The tubing is kinked or blocked.

Please do not alter the settings on the monitor without discussion with your nurse

If the problem cannot be solved, contact your district nurse day or night. If the therapy unit is switched off for more than two hours in a 24 hour period it may result in a delay in healing; a new VAC dressing or alternative dressing must be applied.

Our patients matter
Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust listens and responds to patients and their carers to help improve the services we deliver.

If you have any comments, compliments or concerns you can speak with a member of staff or contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and Complaints Team

Telephone: 0151 471 2377 or Freephone: 0800 328 2941
Email: palsandcomplaints@merseycare.nhs.uk

To request the leaflet in an alternative format or language please contact the Equality and Diversity Team.

Telephone: 0151 472 7458
Email: equality2@merseycare.nhs.uk

Topical Negative Pressure and VAC Therapy
Patient Information

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Topical Negative Pressure and VAC
This guide is to provide information about the use of negative pressure in wound care and may help provide answers to any questions you may have.

What is Topical Negative Pressure?
You may hear it referred by different names; VAC or Vacuum Assisted Closure is one type of topical negative pressure therapy. VAC Therapy is a machine that uses negative pressure (a vacuum) to encourage blood supply to the wound surface, taking away any extra fluid, to improve healing.

Why has VAC been recommended for me?
Your nurse will be able to explain to you in detail, but by using VAC therapy the aim is to improve wound healing more than if we continue with usual dressings.

How long will it take to improve my wound?
This will be individual to you. It may depend on the size of the wound and any other health problems that you may have. VAC therapy may be used for only part of the time to treat your wound.

What does it involve?
A piece of foam will be fitted into the wound, covered with a clear plastic dressing and attached to a plastic tube and canister that is fitted into a machine. When switched ON fluid from the wound will then pass down the tube and collect in the canister.

Can I move around while on VAC Therapy?
Discuss this with your nurse. The therapy unit is charged from the mains electricity, please ensure that the unit is not being charged when you are walking to avoid the risk of falls/tripping over the wire.

Is VAC therapy painful?
You may feel a pulling sensation when VAC is first started or on dressing change. If you do experience some discomfort, tell your nurse who will discuss with your doctor pain relief which can be taken before having your wound redressed.

How often will the VAC dressing be changed?
Usually every 2-3 days.

How often will the VAC dressing be changed?
It is recommended that the VAC is switched on at all times when in use, if not, it may affect the beneficial effects of VAC therapy.

Daily Tips
- Check that the VAC unit is charged and working i.e. the unit is switched on, all clamps are open and the foam is “wrinkled” and shrunk down on a regular basis
- If you experience a sudden increase in pain, a smell from the wound or notice that the fluid in the tube is bright red inform your nurse immediately
- Don’t disconnect VAC therapy for more than two hours in a 24 hour period
- Your nurse will discuss with you how you may wash or shower while receiving VAC therapy. The therapy unit should not be placed in/near water.