



Post Operative Instructions: Wound Vac- Negative Pressure Wound Therapy

Negative pressure wound therapy (NPWT) uses a sponge or foam-like material (dressing) placed on or inside the wound. The wound is then covered and sealed with a cover dressing that sticks to your skin (is adhesive) to keep air out. This should be watertight and you could shower over it. A tube is attached to the cover dressing, and this tube connects to a small pump. The pump removes drainage from the wound.

NPWT helps to increase blood flow to the wound and heal it from the inside. NPWT also helps pull the edges of the wound together and removes fluids and germs from the wound. NPWT may also be called "wound vac".

What are the risks?

NPWT is usually safe to use. However, problems can occur, including:

- Skin irritation from the dressing adhesive.
- Bleeding.
- Infection. Signs of infection include:
 - More redness, swelling, or pain
 - More fluid or blood.
 - Warmth or hardness around the wound.
 - Pus or a bad smell.
 - Red streaks leading from the wound.
- Dehydration. Wounds with large amounts of drainage can cause excessive body fluid loss.
- Pain.

Failure: if the pump fails to keep the sponge hard and compressed please call the office immediately. Do NOT allow the vac to stay on without proper suction. Present to the clinic for proper removal.

Supplies needed:

- Wound cleanser or salt-water solution (saline).
- Skin protectant. This may be a wipe, film, or spray.
- Clean or germ-free (sterile) scissors.
- New sponge or foam.
- Cover dressing.
- Gauze pad.

- Tape.
- Also have available:
 - Soap and water, or hand sanitizer.
 - Disposable gloves.
 - Eye protection.
 - A disposable garbage bag.
 - Protective clothing.

Call the clinic immediately for a "clinical staff visit" to have the dressing changed.

Change the dressing as scheduled, if the dressing loses suction, or the pump is off for 2 hours or more. Call to have this done, do not remove it on your own as this exposes a clean wound to a possibly dirty environment.

General tips and recommendations

If the alarm sounds:

- Stay calm and prepare to troubleshoot.
- **Do not** turn off the pump or do anything with the dressing.
- The alarm may go off for many reasons, including:
 - The battery is low. Change the battery or plug the device into electrical power.
 - The dressing has a leak. Find the leak and put tape over the leak.
 - The fluid collection container is full. Change the fluid container.
- Call your health care provider right away if you cannot fix the problem.
- Explain to your health care provider what is happening. Follow his or her instructions.

General instructions

- **Do not** turn off the pump unless told to do so by your health care provider.
- **Do not** turn off the pump for more than 2 hours. If the pump is off or you lose suction to the dressing for more than 2 hours, the dressing will need to be changed.
- Check the machine frequently to make sure that therapy is on and that all clamps are open.
- **Do not** use over-the-counter medicated or antiseptic creams, sprays, liquids, or dressings unless told by your health care provider.
- **Do not** take baths, swim, or use a hot tub until your health care provider approves. You may only be allowed to take sponge baths. Ask your health care provider if you may take showers. If your health care provider says it is okay to shower:
 - **Do not** take the pump into the shower.
 - Make sure the wound dressing is protected and sealed. The wound dressing must stay dry.

Contact a health care provider if - THE PUMP FAILS and if:

- You have new pain.
- You develop irritation, a rash, or itching around the wound or dressing.
- You see new color changes (black, grey, yellow, or white) in the wound.
- The dressing changes are painful or cause bleeding.

- The pump has been off for more than 2 hours, and you do not know how to change the dressing.
- The pump alarm goes off, and you do not know what to do.

Get help right away if:

- You have a lot of bleeding.
- The wound breaks open.
- You have severe pain.
- You have signs of infection, such as:
 - More redness, swelling, or pain.
 - More fluid or blood.
 - Warmth or hardness.
 - Pus or a bad smell.
 - Red streaks leading from the wound.
 - A fever.
- You see a sudden change in the color or texture of the drainage.
- You have signs of dehydration, such as:
 - Little or no tears, urine, or sweat.
 - Muscle cramps.
 - Very dry mouth.
 - Headache.
 - Dizziness or confusion.

Summary

- NPWT uses a sponge or dressing placed on or inside the wound.
- NPWT helps to increase blood flow to the wound and heal it from the inside.
- Follow your health care provider's instructions on how to clean your wound and how to change the dressing.
- Contact a health care provider if you have new pain, irritation, or a rash, or if the alarm goes off and you do not know what to do.
- Get help right away if you have a lot of bleeding, your wound breaks open, or you have severe pain.

Also, get help if you have signs of infection.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

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