

Negative Pressure Wound Therapy (NPWT or Wound VAC Therapy)

Negative pressure wound therapy uses negative pressure (or suction), to help wounds heal.

Benefits

- Increases blood flow to wound.
- Provides moist wound healing.
- Draws wound edges together.
- Removes extra fluid and germs.
- Reduces wound odor.
- Reduces need for dressing changes.
- Promotes wound healing.

How It Works

A foam dressing is placed in the wound. A clear dressing seals in the foam dressing to create an airtight seal. Tubing connects to the dressing and to the NPWT machine. Therapy is started to preset negative pressure (suction) settings. The wound drainage collects in a canister.

The machine can be unplugged for short amounts of time (like a short walk). Keep the machine plugged in as often as you can to keep the battery charged.

Dressing Changes

Dressings are changed about 3 times per week. Yours will be done _____. This will be done by a trained doctor, physician assistant, nurse practitioner or nurse.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 3/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#6075.

Slight pain is common. Take pain medicine 30-60 minutes before dressing changes. Ask your doctor or nurse about showering or bathing.

Length of Time to Heal Wound

The length of time to heal a wound varies. Factors that can affect wound healing are:

- Condition, size and location of the wound
- Nutrition
- Elevated blood sugars
- Infection
- Tobacco use
- Pressure or friction to the wound

When to Call

- Blood in your canister. Report this right away.
- Increased odor from your dressing. Slight odor is normal.
- Increased pain.
- Increased redness around the dressing.
- Increased warmth around dressing.
- Flu-like symptoms: fever, chills, nausea, vomiting, or muscle aches.
- Seal/loss of suction of the dressing for 2 hours or longer.