

If you have a large wound or a wound that is slow to heal, the consultant or wound care nurse specialist may recommend the use of Negative Pressure Wound Therapy (NPWT).

### How does Negative Pressure Wound Therapy work?

Gentle suction is applied to the wound creating negative pressure which speeds up the wound healing

- Reducing swelling.
- Improving blood supply to the area.
- Speeding up tissue formation.
- Lowering the amount of bacteria in the wound.
- Removing excess wound ooze.

There are no risks to this therapy providing you have been assessed for the therapy and do not have the machine switched off for more than two in 24 hours.

NPWT therapy is only part of the healing process. It is important that you:

- Maintain a good fluid intake;
- Eat a nutritionally balance diet;
- Continue with any prescribed medications and
- Maintain gentle exercise.

Before you are discharged home with a machine you will be shown what to do in the event that the alarm goes off. While you are in hospital the nurse will deal with this. This does not happen often and is usually because you need to change the canister or there is a leak in the dressing.

### How is it applied?

Following assessment to see if you and your wound are suitable for this therapy, nursing staff will apply a sterile gauze or sponge dressing to the wound, covering it completely with a clear adhesive dressing. This is connected by a tube to a suction machine. When the machine is switched on, the gauze or sponge is sucked down flat to the wound bed.

### How often are the sponges/gauze changed?

Every 2 – 3 days. As your wound gets smaller, the size of the sponge/gauze will decrease.

### What happens to the fluid which is sucked out?

It goes into a canister on the side of the machine and these can be changed as often as necessary without changing the sponge/gauze.

### Does it hurt?

When the suction is applied there may be a drawing sensation in the wound, but this soon goes.

- If you have a painful wound, you will be given pain relief.
- You will need to take pain relief at least 30 minutes before the dressing is done.

Most patients find that pain can decrease or disappear with the therapy.

[continued]

## Can I still walk around or shower with the Negative Pressure Wound Therapy machine?

There are two different models of the Negative Pressure Wound Therapy machine.

The larger one is used in hospital for large wounds or ones with a lot of fluid loss. The tubes can be clamped off to allow you to go to the toilet or shower, or clamped to an IV pole on wheels.

The smaller machine is for smaller wounds with less fluid. This is easily managed at home and fits into a small bag which is worn around the waist or shoulder. It can also be clamped and disconnected for showering.

It is important not to get your machine wet. Once finished showering and are dressed, reconnect to your machine.

## What else do I need to know?

- While you are receiving therapy with this machine we ask that you take care and responsibility for its safety. Please make sure that it is not taken into the bathroom area while you are washing but is disconnected and left safely in another room. It is susceptible to water infiltrating the screen and repairs can cost up to \$2,000
- Please make sure it is not placed under a bed that can be lowered and therefore damage the machine, or placed anywhere else where it could fall or be knocked. The nurse will answer any questions about this
- Patient and family/whānau are able to change the canisters themselves. You will be shown how to do this and given enough supplies
- Negative Pressure Wound Therapy is used for large acute or chronic slow healing wounds to speed up the healing process. It is not suitable for a small wound which will heal naturally

- There are some other wounds for which it is not suitable, so an assessment will be carried out by a nurse experienced in wound management before therapy starts
- You have the right at any time to refuse to commence or continue with Negative Pressure Wound Therapy. Please discuss this with your nurse.

## Notes

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## Contact us

### District Nurses:

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