

Frequently Asked Questions

How does it work?

- The ActiVAC's suction helps with healing:
 - For wounds: it helps new tissue grow and gently pulls the wound edges together.
 - For closed incisions: it helps hold the edges of the incision together.
 - For skin grafts: it helps hold the graft in place

It is very important that the suction is ON for 24 hours a day. It is to be turned OFF only for dressing changes.

- The suction pulls the drainage through the dressing into the canister.
- The machine will 'beep' when the canister needs to be changed (**¾ full**). The drainage amount should be small-to-none if you have an incision or graft.
- The machine uses coloured lights and 'beeps' to alert you when there is a problem with the dressing or the machine (see page 3).
- The dressing must stick firmly to the skin to stop air from going under the dressing causing an air leak and a loss of suction.
- ActiVAC runs on a re-chargeable battery.
- The machine comes with a carrying case.



What do I do while I have this dressing on?

- **While you are awake**, check every 2 hours that the:
 - Dressing is firm to touch.
 - Both tubing clamps are open (see image right).
 - Tubing is not kinked.
 - Canister is not full.
 - Therapy ON/OFF button shows **GREEN** indicating that the machine is ON.
 - Therapy icon is rotating to show that suction is being applied.
 - Battery has enough charge left in it (plug in the machine if watching TV, reading, etc.,).
- **Before going to sleep**,
 - Check that the canister has enough space to collect the drainage overnight.
 - Plug in the machine to fully recharge the batteries.



How long can the machine be unplugged?

Up to 6 hours.



Does it hurt?

- It is normal to feel slight pulling or tugging due to the suction. If this hurts, take your pain medication if prescribed, or talk to your Nurse regarding pain medication.
- You may feel some discomfort when the dressing is removed.

What needs to be planned for my dressing changes?

With your Community Health Nurse, plan:

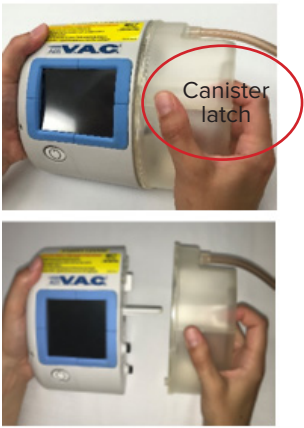

- The day and time for your dressing change.
- When to have a shower (if allowed, see below).
- For wounds only; when to turn the machine OFF (usually 30 minutes before the change).
- When to take pain medication, if needed (usually 30 to 45 minutes before the dressing change).

Write the plan here:

Can I have a shower/tub bath?

- If the dressing is covering an incision or a skin graft, do not shower or tub bath. Showering must wait until the dressing is no longer needed so that the graft is not disturbed.
- If the dressing is covering a wound, you may shower (no tub baths) with the dressing in place, but the shower must be done immediately before a scheduled dressing change.
- The machine is battery-run therefore it must be disconnected from the dressing prior to the shower.
- How to set for your shower:
 - Gather your supplies (an alcohol swab, two – 2x2 gauze dressings, and tape).
 - Wash your hands.
 - Press the Power button for 3 seconds to turn the machine OFF.
 - Close the 2 white tubing clamps.
 - Clean the connection point of dressing tubing and canister tubing with the alcohol swab for 30 seconds and let air dry.
 - Disconnect the dressing tubing from the canister tubing.
 - Use a 2x2 gauze to cover the tubing ends; tape the gauze in place.
- Your shower time should be kept short. The dressing is waterproof but try to keep the shower spray off the dressing as much as possible.
- After your shower, gently pat the dressing dry and wait for the nurse to change your dressing.



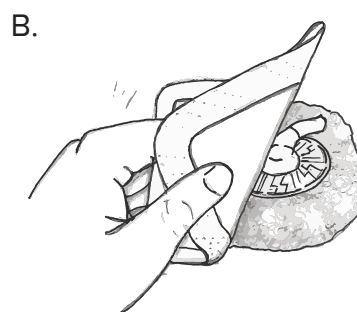
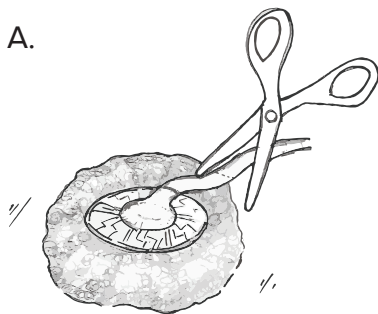
Trouble-Shooting	
Alerts / Alarms	What to Do
<p>Battery Life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GREEN (50% -100%) - charged. • YELLOW - low. • RED - critically low . 	<p>Plug in the machine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YELLOW battery indicator - plug in now. • RED battery indicator - plug in now. • Note: the battery takes up to 8 hours to fully charge when it is at low. • Keep machine plugged in to maximize the battery life.
<p>Blockage (single beep is heard):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tube is blocked. 	<p>Check for blockage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the 2 white tubing clamps are open. • Ensure the tubing is not kinked.
<p>Canister (single beep is heard):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The canister is not clicked into place. <p>The canister is full.</p> 	<p>Ensure the canister is correctly inserted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To remove, press down on canister latch and pull the canister out. To reinsert, place into position and push in. Listen for the click (canister is inserted correctly). <p>Change the canister:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press the Therapy ON/OFF button to stop the therapy. • Close the 2 white tubing clamps. • Disconnect the canister from the machine; press down on the canister latch and pull the canister out. • Open the new canister package and have an alcohol swab ready. Wash your hands. • Clean the connection point of the two tubings with an alcohol swab for 30+ seconds. Let dry for 30+ seconds. Disconnect the tubings. • Remove the protective cap on the new canister tubing. Connect the dressing tubing to the canister tubing. • Insert the new canister into the machine; listen for the click (canister is inserted correctly). • Press the Therapy ON/OFF button to restart therapy. • Put the used canister in the garbage.
<p>Therapy Inactive</p> <p>Suction is off but the machine is powered on.</p>	<p>Press the Therapy ON/OFF button to restart the therapy.</p>
<p>Low Pressure (single beep)</p> <p>The negative pressure can not be reached.</p>	<p>Follow steps in 'Blockage' section.</p>
<p>Leak Alarm (repeating beep)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If leak not fixed in 3 minutes the Therapy turns OFF. <p>The Leak Alarm Screen will appear.</p>  <p>Orange bar indicates how large the leak is.</p> <p>Press button to silent the alarm.</p>	<p>Check that tubing connection is tight. Check that the canister is inserted correctly.</p> <p>Fix the air leak:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find your trouble-shooting supplies. • Press the Seal Check button. • Use your fingers to press along the dressing edges. Watch for the coloured indicator bar to turn GREEN. • Cut the clear dressing into strips. Fix the leak by covering it with the strip(s). • Check that the bar shows GREEN. Add more strips if needed. • Press the Exit button. Check that the Therapy On/Off button is showing GREEN. You may need to press the button to turn Therapy ON. • If the leak happens again, repeat the steps above. • If unable to fix the leak, see page 5 "Nothing is Working..."
<p>Machine Failure (a repeating beep)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several alerts appearing on the screen then all lights go OFF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that the machine is plugged in. • If all lights are off, the machine has failed; see page 5 "Nothing is Working..."
<p>Call the Community Health Unit office and follow trouble-shooting tips provided <i>and/or</i> Call 3M/KCI Customer Service 1-800-668-5403; there is someone always available to help.</p>	

Nothing is Working...

1. Let the Community Health Unit office know as soon as possible that there is a problem with the dressing and/or machine that you can not fix (if it is after office hours, leave a message).
2. You will need to do the following to manage the dressing:
 - Find your trouble-shooting supplies (scissors, dressing, tape).
 - Ensure the machine is OFF; press/hold the Power button for 3 seconds
 - Wash your hands.
 - Follow the checked (✓) Dressing Plan below.

Dressing Plan #1: Cut & Cover – Wound, Incision or Skin Graft.

- Close the two white tubing clamps.
- Cut the tubing close to the black dressing (see image A).
- Cover the cut tubing with the dressing that has been supplied; tape in place as needed (see image B).
- This dressing will catch the drainage, change it as often as needed to keep it dry.
- Keep the machine and the canister for the Nurse.



Dressing Plan #2: Dressing Removal – Wound

- Make sure the suction has been **OFF** for 30 minutes before removing the dressing.
- Gently remove the dressing. Some of the wound fillers (black and/or white foam, mesh dressing) may come out with the dressing at the same time – this is okay.
- Remove any loose wound fillers. If the wound has deep packing then, as talked about with the Nurse, remove the wound fillers that have been packed into these spaces. If they do not come out with a gentle tug then leave them in place.
- Cover the entire wound with the dressing supplied. Secure with tape if needed.
- This dressing will catch the drainage; change it as often as needed to keep it dry.
- Disconnect the dressing tubing from the canister tubing. Place the old dressing and all of the fillers from the wound into a plastic bag for the Nurse to see on the next visit.
- Keep the machine and the canister for the Nurse.

Dressing Plan #3: Dressing Removal - Incision

- Gently remove dressing.
- Cover the entire incision with the dressings given to you, tape in place if needed.
- Disconnect the dressing tubing from the canister tubing. Place the old dressing into a plastic bag for the Nurse to see on the next visit.
- Keep the machine and the canister for the Nurse.

When to Seek Help

Call the Nurse and/or your Surgeon/Family Physician/Nurse Practitioner if you have any of the following:

- New or increasing pain.
- A temperature of 38°C or higher.
- Feeling unwell (nausea/vomiting, lightheaded, dizzy or weak).
- Swelling, warmth, tenderness, redness, itchiness at your dressing site.
- Bad/foul odour coming from the dressing or cartridge.
- Need to change the cartridge more often than usual.
- Drainage in the tube or cartridge is thicker than usual or has changed colour.

Turn OFF the machine and immediately call Emergency Services (911) if you see the following in the dressing, tube, or canister:

- Blood (red); unexpected or new bleeding.
- Bile (green) for abdominal wounds only.
- Stool (brownish) for abdominal wounds only.

For clients living with spinal cord injury and having signs/symptoms of Autonomic Dysreflexia **turn OFF the machine and call Emergency Services (911)**.

Community Health Unit Contact Numbers

Health Authority	Area	Phone Number
Fraser Health	All areas	855-412-2121
Interior Health	Call the Community Health Unit closest to your home	
Northern Health	Call the Community Health Unit closest to your home	
Vancouver Coastal Health	North Shore/Coastal	604-986-7111
	Richmond	604-875-4510
	Vancouver	604-263 -7377
Vancouver Island	South Island	250-388-2273
	Central Island	250-739-5749
	North Island	250-331-8570

Created by: British Columbia Provincial Nursing Skin & Wound Committee



Making better
decisions together
with patients
and families

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>
or email pchem@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. **FO.160.A28**
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