



Helping You Heal:  
Your Guide to Wound Care

# Negative Pressure



Ontario  
Health atHome

## The Program

This booklet will help you:

- Manage your wound at home,
- Improve and maintain your health and quality of life,
- Prevent new wounds.

You can use this booklet and the accompanying passport to:

- Keep track of information about your care,
- Guide your day-to-day wound care,
- Know when you need to call your care team,
- Ensure that your wound is being managed in the best way possible.

**Your team looks forward to working with YOU to Heal/Take Control of Your Wound.**



Wound Self Management Program

### YOUR PASSPORT TO HEALTH

Your Health Passport is for you and your family and/or caregiver. It contains information that is important to you, your condition and treatments as you begin managing your wound. Inside you will find forms and tables that will become a daily log as you move through caring for your wound. Make sure you bring this passport with you to all your medical appointments/ procedures.



You have developed some personal goals, and your passport is your tool to keeping track of them, and your care, as you begin managing your wound at home.

To heal your wound you will need to take care of yourself and pay attention to your body, but it does not mean you need to stop doing the things you love to do. This booklet is here to help you!

Keep this booklet and your passport nearby, in a convenient spot, so you can refer to them and make notes about your healing journey. It helps to know a bit more about your particular wound.

## Negative Pressure Wound Therapy

Your wound is going to require some help to improve its healing process.

Negative Pressure Wound Therapy (NPWT) is the process by which a sealed dressing connected to a vacuum pump is used to create suction to help with healing.

The purpose of NPWT is to:

- Prepare the wound for closure
- Control drainage
- Reduce how often you need your dressing changed
- Increase blood flow to the wound
- Promote new tissue growth
- Reduce the size and complexity of the wound
- Reduce pain you may experience with dressing changes
- Act as a barrier to bacteria and reduce risk for infection
- Reduce wound odour

Your care provider may use either a Vacuum Assisted Closure (VAC), or a PICO unit.

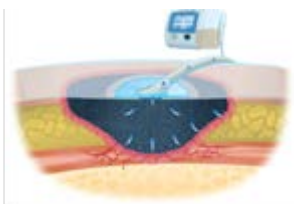


## Vacuum Assisted Closure (VAC)

The Vacuum Assisted Closure (VAC) system consists of 3 parts: a special sponge with a tube attached, a pump with a collection canister and a drape to seal the wound.



- 1. What does it do?** It provides negative pressure (suction) to the wound, which helps pull the edges of the wound toward the center. It also removes drainage from the wound to help it heal and reduce infection.



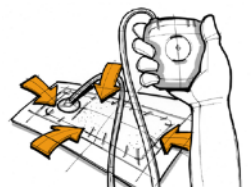
- 2. How does it work?** A special sponge is placed in the wound and a drain is laid on top of it. The entire area is covered with a transparent drape to secure it to the healthy skin. When the drain is attached to the vacuum source, fluid is drawn out of the wound into the collection canister.



- 3. Can I move around with it?** Yes! The carrying case has a belt loop and separate adjustable strap to allow for carrying options. When worn or carried, keep the unit in the upright position.



- 4. How do I know if the VAC system is working?** The vacuum source will say "Therapy On". Make sure the clamps are open and the tubing is not kinked. You need to have the vacuum source on for the treatment to work.



- 5. What does the dressing look like?** The dressing should have a slightly wrinkled appearance and feel firm to the touch.



**What happens if the pump alarms?** The pump will alarm if...

- The canister is **full** (replace the canister)
- There is a **leak** in the dressing (smooth it out/repair leak with extra dressing)
- The battery is **low** (keep unit plugged into wall)
- 4) The unit is **tilted** (will sound if tilted >45degrees).

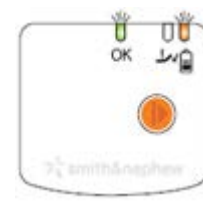
## PICO units

PICO is a therapy pump that is battery operated. It can be easily carried around in a pocket or bag to allow for movement and discretion. The pump has a suction that is connected to an absorbent gentle adhesive dressing.

- 1. What does it do?** It provides suction known as negative pressure wound (NPWT) which draws out excess fluid from the wound and protects the area from getting dirty. It ultimately helps to promote healing.
- 2. How does it work?** A pump is connected to an absorbent dressing. When the pump is turned on, air is pulled out of the dressing and helps move the fluid from your wound, into the dressing. It must be on for at least 22 hours each day.
- 3. Will it be painful?** The first time the pump is turned on, you may feel a slight pulling or drawing sensation. If you do experience pain, talk to your nurse or physician for advice.
- 4. How do I know if the PICO system is working?** While the PICO pump is working, a green light on the top of the device will flash continuously.
- 5. What does the dressing look like?** The dressing should have a slightly wrinkled appearance and feel firm to the touch.
- 6. What happens if the pump alarms?** The pump has a visual alarm for “Low Battery” and “Low Vacuum”.

**Low Battery:** The green and orange will flash together when the battery needs to be changed.

**Low Vacuum:** The orange light will flash and the pump will make a buzzing sound. Check for small lifts in the dressing and smooth down with your hand.



## Managing Your Wound

Knowing what caused your wound will help you manage it and prevent future wounds. In order to be YOUR healthiest, you should:

### Wash Hands

The most important thing you can do to prevent infection is to wash your hands. You can use soap and water for 20 seconds, or an alcohol based hand rub. Wash before and after touching any dressings.

### Check your wound daily for signs of infection/increased drainage

It is important for you to monitor your wound and know when to call for help. Review these signs with your healthcare provider (see end of booklet).

### Stay hydrated

Water helps replace the fluid lost with draining wounds. Make sure you drink about 6 to 8 cups of liquid each day, unless your healthcare provider tells you otherwise.

### Protect your wound from trauma or injury

Don't let anything touch or bump against the dressing. When showering, ensure the jets are not directly facing the dressing.

### Eat a balanced diet

A balanced diet high in protein, keeps your skin strong and helps wounds heal.

### If you smoke, QUIT!

It's bad for blood flow, your skin, and your body. Your team will talk to you about options that will help you kick the habit! It's truly one of the best things you can do for your body at any age.

## Signs of Trouble

Your wound will change throughout the healing process. Changing your dressing gives you a chance to take a closer look at your wound.

Call your nurse if you see the following changes:

- The fluid in your dressing changes from clear to cloudy or bright red
- You see the dressing fill quickly with blood
- The wound looks more red than usual or has a foul smell
- The skin around your wound looks reddened or irritated
- The dressing feels or appears loose
- You experience pain
- Your PICO alarm unit does not turn off

## During Nursing Visits

Your nurse will:

- Take a health history and assess your skin
- Perform a wound assessment at least twice a week
- Perform a pain assessment
- Ask questions about your nutrition and exercise status
- Inspect your machine to ensure its functioning properly
- Remove your dressing and cleanse the wound with water
- Apply new dressings and discuss with you how to care for your wound & dressing until the next visit
- Explain the NPWT machine and how to use it, and teach you about your dressings.

## Managing Your Wound

Here are a few scenarios that will help you to judge how your healing is progressing:

### **Your wound is healthy.**

Your wound looks very similar to the last dressing change. There is no redness, inflammation, pain, bleeding and the discharge looks the same. Your wound may look smaller and the discharge may be less.

**Your wound may be in trouble, call your nurse. If you experience changes in color, numbness, tingling, or pain with compression remove it until you are able to talk with your nurse.**

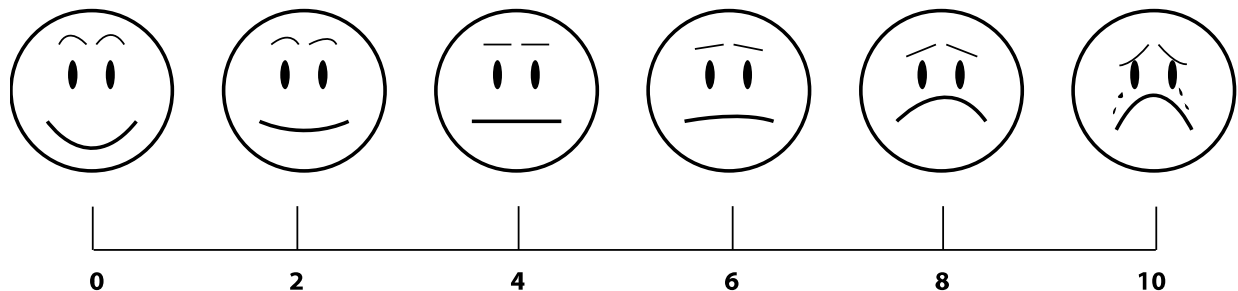
Your wound looks larger or deeper. There is some redness or the color of your foot is different, it feels warmer and it looks swollen. There is no bleeding but the discharge is different, or there is more than usual. If you are wearing compression you begin experiencing numbness, tingling or new pain.

**Call your nurse or follow up with your primary care provider. If there is an emergency, call 911.** Your wound looks much larger or deeper. There is redness, swelling and bleeding that isn't stopping. The discharge is very different or there is much more of it. You have pain and a fever.

## Daily Activities

Please note the following daily activities:

- Check your dressing daily. Ensure your dressing is dry and stable. Check to see if a dressing change is required.
- Inspect your skin and body.
- Assess your wound for any changes daily or with each dressing change.
- Eat three meals a day based on Canada's Food Guide.
- Assess how you generally feel today.
- Assess your pain level. The scale below may help you to assess your pain level. You may review this with your nurse at appointments.
- Follow your exercise plan.





## Red Flags

**If you experience any of these, call 911 or go to the emergency room immediately!**

- Your temperature is above 100 °F (37.8 °C) for more than 4 hours.
- You have difficulty breathing.
- You feel confused.
- You have fever, chills, or light-headedness.
- Your wound is bleeding and does NOT stop.

## Contact Information

Use this worksheet to record important numbers and information while you manage your wound at home.

**My Nurse's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cell Phone No.:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Office Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**My Care Coordinator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cell Phone No.:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Office Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**My Physician:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cell Phone No.:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Office Number:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Contact Us

If you have any questions regarding this service, please contact:  
310-2222 • [ontariohealthathome.ca](https://ontariohealthathome.ca)

Ontario Health atHome has many community offices in the North East to serve you, including:

### Kirkland Lake

53 Government Road West  
Kirkland Lake ON P2N 2E5  
Telephone: 705-567-2222  
Toll free: 1-888-602-2222

### North Bay

1164 Devonshire Ave.  
North Bay ON P1B 6X7  
Telephone: 705-476-2222  
Toll free: 1-888-533-2222

### Parry Sound

6 Albert St.  
Parry Sound ON P2A 3A4  
Toll free: 1-800-440-6762

### Sault Ste. Marie

390 Bay Street, Suite 103  
Sault Ste. Marie ON P6A 1X2  
Telephone: 705-949-1650  
Toll free: 1-800-668-7705

### Sudbury

40 Elm St, Suite 41-C  
Sudbury ON P3C 1S8  
Telephone: 705-522-3461  
Toll free: 1-800-461-2919  
TTY: 711  
(ask operator for 1-888-533-2222)

### Timmins

330 Second Avenue, Suite 101  
Timmins ON P4N 8A4  
Telephone: 705-267-7766  
Toll free: 1-888-668-2222

# Exceptional care – wherever you call home.

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Ontario Health atHome coordinates in-home and community-based care for thousands of patients across the province every day.

For information and referrals related to home and community care or to learn more about long-term care home placement services, please call 310-2222. No area code is required.

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[www.ontariohealthathome.ca](http://www.ontariohealthathome.ca)



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