

Vagal nerve stimulation recovery

Your child has had surgery under general anaesthetic for a vagal nerve stimulation (VNS) implantation or battery generator change. This leaflet gives information about how to care for your child's wound and what to expect after leaving hospital. If you have any questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for your child.

Pain after a VNS operation

Your child might feel sore and have discomfort around the site of their operation but this should not be severe pain. It might feel uncomfortable when they move their neck or left shoulder. The regular painkillers that you give your child (such as paracetamol) can be given for pain relief if needed. Make sure you follow the instructions on the bottle.

Getting back to normal activities

Your child should avoid contact sports until the wound is healed, and avoid any heavy physical work. The child should not touch or fiddle with the dressing or wound areas.

Wound dressings

The dressings should be left in place for at least 5 to 7 days. It is normal for a little discharge (reddish fluid) to show after the operation. If this happens you can place another dressing over the top, or replace with another waterproof dressing. If there is a continuous leaking of a smelly discharge, please contact your GP or speak to a member of the VNS team (contact details at the end of this leaflet).

Stitches

The majority of children will be given stitches that are dissolvable that do not need to be removed. If dissolvable stitches are not suitable for your child, he/she will be advised when you are being discharged home that you have stitches that need to be removed. If your stitches need to be removed, please book an appointment with your GP practice nurse for approximately 7 days after your operation date.

Wound sites and scars

The skin around the operation site might be bruised, reddish in colour and swollen for up to about 2 weeks, but will settle. When the dressings are first removed, the wound or scar might be red, raised and a little bit uncomfortable. For most people, all of these symptoms gradually improve. Sometimes the chest scars remain red, a little thick and become raised.

Showers and baths

Your child can have a wash but the surgery sites must be kept covered and dry until the wound has healed.

What to look out for

Sometimes a wound can get infected or does not heal as expected.

Contact your GP practice nurse or a member of the VNS team if:

- your child feels hot or has a high temperature (fever)
- the wound area feels tight, hot, or uncomfortable
- fluid oozes from the wound area
- the scar is not healing

The wound will need to be checked, cleaned and redressed. A course of antibiotics might be needed and, very rarely, the VNS device might need to be removed.

Switching new VNS devices on

You should get an outpatient appointment for 2 to 4 weeks' time. This appointment will take 1 to 2 hours, and the VNS device will be switched on and the magnet use explained.

VNS battery replacements

The new VNS device is usually programmed with the same settings as the device that was removed. If the old device was no longer stimulating, it might be left switched off or turned on at a lower current setting.

You will be told by the surgical or nursing team if it has been reprogrammed and if an outpatient appointment is needed to programme the device. If an outpatient appointment is required, it will be within 2 to 4 weeks. This might be at Evelina London or your nearest VNS service.

VNS magnets

You can use the magnets from a previous device with any VNS device.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's VNS, please contact a member of the VNS team. You can also contact your GP practice. Out of hours, please contact the ward or go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

Epilepsy nurse specialist, **mobile** 07970 698253

Epilepsy clinical fellow, **mobile** 07721 244494

Neuro secretaries, **phone** 020 7188 3998, **email** PaediatricEpilepsySecretaries@gstt.nhs.uk

Paediatric neurosurgery at King's College Hospital (via switchboard), **phone** 020 3299 9000

Savannah Ward, **phone** 020 7188 5940

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **web** www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets



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