

Neurosciences - Adult Epilepsy Services

Vagus nerve stimulation therapy: patient discharge information

Name of ward discharged from		Date of discharge	
Signature of nurse giving information		Name in block letters	

You have been discharged from Addenbrooke's Hospital following surgical implantation of a Vagus Nerve Stimulator (VNS) on under the care of Mr Watts, Consultant Surgeon. The following information may be of help after your discharge from hospital.

1) Will I be in pain following my operation for VNS?

As you are aware, you have two wound sites following this operation, one on the left side of your neck and the other on the left side of your chest. Both wound sites contain stitches with a dressing and a plaster applied over them. These areas will be sore and uncomfortable, but should not cause you severe pain. Any 'over the counter' painkillers will be effective if you wish to treat the discomfort. Alternatively, you can ask your doctor prior to discharge, your GP or local chemist for advice.



VNS Lead transmits signals from the generator to the vagus nerve

Generator is implanted under the skin in the upper left side of the chest

2) What should I avoid doing to prevent any problems with the wound site?

You should not carry out any of the following until the stitches have been removed and you have been told to return to everyday activities. Avoid lifting any heavy objects, physical work such as digging. Avoid wetting the dressing during a shower or bath. Before discharge, nursing staff on the ward will provide you with some water proof dressings.

3) What should I expect with my dressings?

You should not remove either dressing. It is normal for a little discharge of reddish fluid to occur after an operation. If this comes through the dressing, you should apply another dressing over the top. If you feel the ooze is increasing, please contact your GP and they will check and redress the wound if necessary. Alternatively, contact a member of the Epilepsy Surgery Team at Addenbrooke's Hospital (contact details can be found at the back of the leaflet).

4) What should I expect with my wounds/scars?

The skin around both operation areas will be bruised, reddish in colour and swollen for several weeks. The scars will appear very red and swollen initially but will, for most people, gradually fade in colour and size depending upon your healing process. In some cases, the chest scar may remain red, thick and become raised. It is normal to see or feel the neck electrode if you move your neck in a specific position. You will also feel the VNS generator under your chest scar and it is normal for the generator to appear as a bump under your scar. The generator may also move slightly under your skin.

5) What should I do about the stitches?

The stitches are dissolvable and will have dissolved between 7 and 10 days following surgery. You will have some steri-strip (strips of dressing) which will be covered with another whole dressing. The strips should be ready to be washed off after seven days. You therefore do not need to attend your GP surgery for removal of stitches..

6) What should I do if I think the wound area is infected?

Occasionally a wound may become infected, if this happens, you may feel hot with or without a high temperature. One or both wounds may feel tight or hot and may produce a discharge with an offensive smell. If this occurs, you should contact your GP practice or a member of the epilepsy surgery team at Addenbrooke's Hospital. A course of oral antibiotics may be required and the wound will be reassessed, cleaned and redressed. Very rarely will the VNS need to be removed due to infection.

7) When will the VNS be switched on?

The VNS is usually switched on two to four weeks after the device has been implanted. You should receive an appointment to attend the VNS clinic in neuro-outpatients at Addenbrooke's Hospital

8) What should I do about my epilepsy drugs

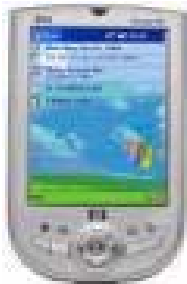
You should continue taking your medication as usual. You should not stop any of medication or reduce the dose.

9) What information will I be given on discharge from hospital?

When you get discharged, you will be given a discharge letter, which you should give to your GP or another doctor/health professional should you experience any problems. You should take this letter with you when you go to have your stitches removed.

10) How do you switch the VNS on?

The VNS is switched on using a hand held computer and wand – please see the pictures below. It is a simple and painless process. The occasional patient feels a tickle at the back of their throat and coughs a little. The magnet kit and information booklet will be fully explained to you and demonstrated during your outpatient appointment which should last approximately 30 minutes, so you have plenty of time to ask questions.



11) What should I do if I have a problem following my discharge from hospital or if I do not receive an outpatient appointment?

If you have a problem, or would like to ask a question or wish to book or rebook a VNS outpatient appointment, please contact:

- Erica Chisanga, Epilepsy Specialist Nurse Practitioner: 01223 217992
- Mr Colin Watts, Consultant Surgeon, via his secretary: 01223 245151 ext 6568
- Dr M Manford, Consultant Neurologist, via his secretary: 01223 216759

If you need urgent advice out of hours, please contact the nurse in charge of the ward from where you were discharged.

Ward:.....

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Potete chiedere di ottenere queste informazioni in altre lingue, in stampato grande o in audiocassetta.

Italian

若你需要本信息的繁體中文、大字體或音訊格式的版本，請要求索取。

Cantonese

તમને આ માહિતી બીજી ભાષાઓમાં, મોટા અક્ષરોમાં અથવા સાંભળી શકાય એવા માધ્યમ (ઓડીઓ ફોર્મેટ)માં જોઈતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો.

Gujarati

تکایہ پرسیار بکھ نہ گھر نہ وزانیاریہت دہوی بہ زمانیکی تر ، بہ پیتی گہورہ یانیش بہ شیوہی دہنگ

Kurdish

آگر آپ کو یہ معلومات دوسری زبانوں میں، بڑے الفاظ کی اشاعت میں یا آڈیو ٹیپ پر درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی اس کیلئے درخواست کریں۔

Urdu



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. Please do not smoke anywhere on the site.
For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free, 0800 169 0 169

Document history

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