Neurosciences - Paediatric Epilepsy Services

Vagus nerve stimulation therapy: patient discharge information

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name of ward discharged from</th>
<th>Date of discharge</th>
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<td>Signature of nurse giving information</td>
<td>Name in block letters</td>
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Your child has been discharged from Addenbrooke's Hospital following surgical implantation of a Vagus Nerve Stimulator (VNS) on ............... under the care of a Consultant Neurosurgeon. The following information may be of help after your discharge from hospital.

**Will my child be in pain following their operation for VNS?**

As you are aware, your child will have two wound sites following this operation, one on the left side of their neck and the other on the left side of their chest. Both wound sites contain stitches with a dressing. These areas will be sore and uncomfortable, but should not cause your child severe pain. Any 'over the counter' painkillers will be effective if you wish to treat the discomfort. Alternatively, you can ask your child’s 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]

**What should my child avoid doing to prevent any problems with the wound site?**

Avoid lifting any heavy objects and be careful with strenuous exercise for the first couple of weeks.
What should I expect with my child’s dressings?
There are no dressings to be removed. The incisions have a skin glue on them which will wash off at seven to ten days. The incisions can be gently washed (during a shower or bath) after three days. It is normal for a little discharge of reddish fluid to occur after an operation. If you feel the ooze is increasing, please contact a member of the Epilepsy Neurosurgery Team at Addenbrooke's Hospital (contact details can be found at the back of the leaflet).

What should I expect with my child’s 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 their 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 your child move’s their neck in a specific position. They will also feel the VNS generator under their chest scar and it is normal for the generator to appear as a bump under their scar. The generator may also move slightly under their skin.

What should I do about my child’s stitches?
The stitches are dissolvable and will have dissolved between seven and ten days following surgery.

What should I do if I think the wound area is infected?
Occasionally a wound may become infected, if this happens, your child 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 a member of the epilepsy neurosurgery 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.

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 Paediatric neurology outpatient’s at Addenbrooke’s. Hospital

What should I do about my child’s epilepsy drugs?
Your child should continue taking their medication as usual. You should not stop any of their medication or reduce the dose.

What information will I be given on my child’s discharge from hospital?
When your child gets discharged, you will be given a discharge letter, which you should give to your GP or another doctor/health professional should your child experience any problems.
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.

What should I do if my child has a problem following my discharge from hospital or if I do not receive an outpatient appointment for them?

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

- Paediatric Epilepsy Nurse Specialists: 01223 586618
- Consultant Neurosurgeon, via secretary: 01223 258434
  or via Nurse Practitioner: bleep 154-680
- Paediatric Consultant Neurologist, via secretary: 01223 274390

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

Ward:............................................................................................................................................
We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.
For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Help with this leaflet:

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

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