

Wound care - Surgical adhesive tapes

Surgical adhesive tapes are used for securing dressings or tubing, such as urinary catheters.¹ In England and Wales over £1.5 million is spent on them annually (ePACT Jan - Mar 2016). Projects in this area are aimed at choosing products with appropriate characteristics for the intended use, which have lower acquisition costs.

Recommendations

- A wide range of surgical adhesive tapes with varying properties are available. Consider characteristics such as the tape's permeability, conformability, stretch, level of adhesion and cost when selecting a product. This is alongside individual factors, such as intended use and the vulnerability of the person's skin.
- Where dressings are being secured together without skin contact, choose the least costly product that secures the dressing sufficiently.
- Soft silicone tapes have been developed to reduce trauma on tape removal. They may be preferred for fragile skin.² They are the most costly option and should only be selected where other products are unsuitable. Seek advice from a tissue viability specialist if necessary.
- For all tape types, price increases as the width of the tape increases; therefore choose the narrowest tape that is suitable for the application.
- GP practices should have a process in place for identifying and investigating:
 - » Prescriptions for non-formulary items.
 - » Large quantities of surgical adhesive tapes (and other dressings).

Choice of tape

The main categories of surgical adhesive tapes from the Drug Tariff are:³

Impermeable plastic adhesive tapes – Occlusive, for total exclusion of water and water vapour.¹ Can cause maceration of the skin.⁴

Permeable, non-woven synthetic adhesive tape – The largest and most frequently prescribed group (ePACT December 2015). Most are paper based or made from a non-woven textile.

Soft silicone tape – Permeable tapes that reduce trauma on removal. May be preferred for fragile skin.²

Others with woven backing fabric – E.g. elastic adhesive tape (extensible) and zinc oxide adhesive tape (non-extensible).

The choice of surgical adhesive tape will depend on the requirements for use and the type of surface to which it will be applied. Consider characteristics of the tape and the individual clinical circumstances, including the fragility of the skin. Factors that may increase skin vulnerability include increasing age and skin diseases such as eczema.⁵

Optimisation of surgical adhesive tape use should focus on choosing products with lower acquisition costs that are suitable for the individual and the intended use. This can be supported by local wound care formularies.

Savings

Table 1. Potential national cost savings for surgical tapes supplied via FP10 (ePACT Jan - Mar 2016)

Annual savings if 10th percentile cost per 1,000 patients reached	£925,801 which equates to £1,523 per 100,000 patients.
Annual savings if 25th percentile cost per 1000 patients reached	£588,907 which equates to £969 per 100,000 patients

Data for spend on surgical adhesive tape supplied through direct procurement are not readily available so cannot be included in the potential savings figures.

Additional resources available: <https://www.prescqipp.info/resources/category/318-wound-care-surgical-adhesive-tapes>



Bulletin



Data pack

References

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3. The January 2016 electronic Drug Tariff. Accessed 27/1/16 via <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/PrescriptionServices/4940.aspx>
4. Joint Formulary Committee. British National Formulary (online) London: BMJ Group and Pharmaceutical Press; January 2016. Accessed 27/1/16 via <https://www.medicinescomplete.com/mc/bnf/current/>
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