

Drain Care

What is the drain for?

Your drain is to stop fluid (lymph and serum) from building up under the skin. This helps your incision to heal. Your doctor will take out the drain when there is less fluid coming out.

What supplies do I need to care for my drain?

- A cup to measure the fluid. The drain chart to document the amount of fluid to bring in with you to your doctor's visit.
- Gauze and tape
- Safety pin to secure to your bra or clothing.

How do I empty the drain?

- Wash your hands to prevent infection.
- Hold the plastic bulb in an upright position with one hand and take the cap off with the other hand.
- Empty the bulb into the cup.
- Squeeze the bulb tightly with one hand and recap it with the other hand. This starts the suction again inside the bulb. DO NOT squeeze the bulb if the cap is on.
- Record the amount of the drainage on the chart. If the drainage is cloudy or creamy, contact the clinic.
- Discard the drainage in the toilet.
- Rinse the cup so it is clean and ready to use again.
- Wash your hands.
- Re-pin the drain back on your clothing. The bulb should always be lower than your incision. This will prevent drainage from flowing back into the tube and incision.
- Once a day, or when necessary, change the dressing after washing the site with soap and warm water.

How often do I empty the drain?

Empty the drain when it is half full. Usually it is about 3-4 times a day.

How much drainage should there be?

The amount of drainage may vary day to day. It should be less each day. Call the office when the drainage is less than 30ml per day from each drain for 2 days in a row, as it may be time for the drain to come out. If you are active, it may increase the amount of drainage.

What color should the drainage be?

The color will vary. It may go from bright to pink then yellow.

How do I strip the drain to keep it unclogged?

Carefully wash your hands.

- To strip the drain, start at the top of the tube, next to your body.
- Firmly hold the tube to stabilize in one hand and squeeze the tube.
- With the other hand, squeeze and slowly slide your thumb and index finger about 2 inches down the tube and pinch
- Move the hand (closest to your body) and grasp the tube just below where the tube is pinched.
- Repeat step 2 until you have "milked" the entire length of the tube.
- Reposition your hands as you move away from the body.
- Always stabilize the tube with one hand while stripping the tubing with the other. This prevents the drain from being pulled out while you are stripping it.

Strip the tube 2 to 3 times daily.

Note: If you are right-handed, it may be helpful to stabilize the tube with your left hand and strip with the right. If left-handed, stabilize with the right and strip with the left.

Don't worry, we'll show you how to do this and it is EASY once you get the hang of it!

When should I call the clinic?

Call the clinic ([406-751-6488](tel:406-751-6488)) if you have:

- Temperature greater than 100.5
- Drainage increased or stops suddenly.
- Drain stitches break or if drain comes out.
- The area around your skin around the drain gets red, swollen or painful.
- The drainage becomes bright red, smell bad or has pus in it.

