

## SURGICAL DRAINS - HOME CARE

A drain is inserted to prevent body fluid from collecting at the surgical site. This should help minimize swelling and pain, and also allow for quicker healing. You may have more than one drain. Each drain consists of a collection tube that is stitched to your skin so that it does not fall out. A small plastic plug at the end of the tube allows the fluid to be emptied. The color of the fluid may be dark red at first because of the large amount of blood cells in the area. Gradually, the color should change to pink-tinged and then finally a yellow straw color. The amount of drainage may vary. The more active you are, the more fluid will be produced. Gradually, the fluid will decrease.

### Caring for the drain

- Allow the drain to hang loosely. Always pin them to your clothing or tie a string through the drain loop and wear it around your neck. The drain should always be lower than your incision.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before caring for your drain.
- Milk the tubing and empty the bulb 3 to 4 times a day.
  - Place the tubing between your forefinger and middle finger.
  - Hold the site where the drain exists the body and gently squeeze the tubing downward moving the fluid and any clots the entire length of the tubing towards the bulb.
  - Empty the bulb to keep it free from fluid (when it is about 2/3 full). Open the stopper on the bulb and allow the fluid to drain into the cup you were given. **Be sure not to touch the inside of the bulb, the cap or the place where the fluid drains in order to keep these areas free from bacteria.**
  - Look at the fluid and make a note of the time and the following:
    - § Amount
    - § Color
    - § Thickness of fluid
- Once the bulb is empty, flatten it against a flat surface and remove all of the air. Then close the stopper, again being careful not to touch the inside. If the bulb does not stay flat make sure the stopper is closed. If the bulb still does not stay flat, call your doctor.

### Drain Removal

The surgeon will remove your drain(s) during a follow-up office visit. This usually occurs when the drainage is reduced to between 20 to 50 cc (1 to 3 tablespoons) per a 24 hour period **OR** four weeks after surgery, whichever comes first. You may feel a pulling sensation with moderate amount of pain only lasting a few seconds when the drain is removed. A small bandage will be placed over the drain site. This will need to be watched for infection for the next several days.

Do not swim or soak in a tub for two days. You may shower. The site should close within 3 to 4 days. You may notice some fluid oozing from the site until healing occurs.

**Notify your surgeon if the following occurs:**

- 100.5 F. fever or chills
- Increased areas of redness around the insertion site
- Increased swelling around the insertion site
- Drainage from the wound itself – that is the incision site and not the tubing
- Cloudy fluid that has a bad odor
- Your drain is collecting thick yellowish or green fluid
- Drainage bulb does not stay flat after being emptied
- Wound edges begin to separate
- Pain is not relieved by your pain medication
- Your drainage is increasing instead of decreasing, or if you have a sudden increase in drainage