

Going home with a drain

The purpose of your drain is to collect fluid from where you had surgery. This helps prevent bruising and swelling. Your drain works by suction. When you go home you will have to empty the drain. A nurse will show you how to do this before you go home.

Helpful tips at home

- Empty the drain into a container or measuring cup.
- Empty the drain when the fluid collects in the bottom or at least every 8 hours. Do not let the drain get too full or it may lose its suction.
- The drain needs to be below the surgery site so that it drains well. Secure the drain with a safety pin to your clothes.
- Check your drain often for kinks and/or clots. You may milk or “strip” the drains to encourage free flow of fluid. There should be no tension on the drain or tubing.

To empty:

1. Wash your hands.
2. Unplug the drainage plug.
3. Hold the drain upside down and squeeze the contents into the container.
4. When it is empty, you need to squeeze the drain again. Hold the squeeze and plug the drain back in. Squeezing compresses the drain which causes the suction. The drain expands as it collects fluid.
5. Measure the fluid and record the amount for the nurse.
6. Flush the fluid down the toilet.
7. Wash your hands.

Call your doctor or community nurse if:

- you notice that your drain does not expand and collect fluid
- the drain falls out
- you have a fever of 38°C or 100°F or higher
- you notice that the drain leaks (often needs milking – no trip to Emergency Room needed)
- the fluid starts to smell
- you have increased swelling, increased redness (hot and inflamed) or increased pain around the drain
- redness around drain (if no larger than a nickel it is not a sign of infection. Only a local reaction to the draw itself)