

# Care of Wound Drains following Breast Surgery

General Surgery

This leaflet is for patients who have had breast surgery and are going home with a drain in place.

## How do I care for my wound?

Following surgery you will have a dressing to the wound.

Underneath this dressing are steri-strips (paper strips) which will be removed in clinic. The wound is closed using dissolvable stitches. If you have had reconstruction surgery your Breast Care Nurse will advise you when the dressings can be removed, usually this is when you are seen in clinic with your consultant.

## Can I bath or shower?

Yes, but you should keep the drain site dry until the drain is removed and not get the bottle or tubing wet.

## How does the drain work?

An active (vacuum) drain uses gentle suction. When the suction in the bottle is active, the green vacuum indicator on the top is in a downward (pressed) position.

## Why are drains needed?

Wound drains are inserted at the time of your operation to remove fluid from the operation site. This reduces the risk of fluid collecting in the wound which helps the healing process and will also minimise bruising to the area. You may have a breast site drain, an axillary (armpit) drain or more than two drains depending on your type of surgery.

## Can I go home with drains in place?

Yes you can and if you go home with the drain in place you must monitor the amount drained each day. This is done by looking at the gauge on the side of the bottle and recording the amount on your chart provided, ideally at the same time each day. Each mark goes up by 10mls. The amount of fluid that is drained will gradually decrease with time, and the colour of the fluid may also change from red to a straw coloured fluid. You may also notice a small amount of debris in the tubing, this is normal.

**The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.**

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

## Looking after your drain at home

Guard against pulling out the tubing and check your drain at regular intervals during the day to look for:

- The tubing has not moved out of position (dislodged)
- For any signs of leakage
- The bottle still has its vacuum (green indicator remains down)
- The amount of drainage has not increased significantly.

## What do I do if the drain falls out?

Usually the tubing will have a stitch in place to prevent it from falling out, however if the drain comes out simply place a piece of clean padding over the small wound where the drain was inserted and contact the Breast Care Nurses or your Out of Hours contact number (Surgical Assessment Unit, Ward A9 01902 694004 or 695004).

If your drain area or wound has become swollen, sore or painful, this may be a build-up of fluid or could be a sign of infection. Contact the Breast Care Nurses or Surgical Assessment Unit, Ward A9 for advice (number as above).

## What if the tubing becomes disconnected?

Place a clean pad or gauze over the tube coming from the operation area, secure it with tape and contact the Breast Care Nurses or the Out of Hours number for advice.

## What should I wear while my drain is in place?

Loose fitting clothing that opens at the front is generally easier to wear and a well fitted, comfortable non-wired bra is helpful to reduce swelling and give support. You may find it comfortable to wear your bra at night too.

## What if my drainage bottle becomes full?

If the bottle is full or has lost the vacuum then it must be changed for a new bottle. To do this:

- Push both clamps (one on the tubing and one on the bottle) across so they are closed
- Disconnect the tube from the bottle by unscrewing
- Screw on the new bottle, making sure it is on tightly as loose connections can lead to loss of suction
- Move both clamps over so that they are fully open



- Your discharging Nurse will demonstrate and teach you or your carer before you leave the ward
- You will also be supplied with a spare drainage bottle
- Full bottles should be placed in the clinical waste bag provided and returned to the Nursing Staff in the Hospital Outpatients Department for disposal.

## When is the drain removed?

This may vary depending on the type of surgery you have undergone. Your Doctor or Breast Care Nurse will advise you on when this will happen. This can be as quick as one day or up to three weeks, normally when the amount of fluid in the bottle has reduced.

## What do I look out for once the drain has been removed?

Following surgery you may develop swelling around your wound site. The swelling is known as a SEROMA. This is a collection of fluid under your skin. The fluid will usually be absorbed naturally. If however the swelling is painful or restricts your arm movement please contact:

- Breast Care Nurses, Monday-Friday 08:30 to 16:00 on 01902 695144
- You can also contact the team by ringing New Cross Hospital on 01902 307999 and asking for the Breast Care Nurses to be bleeped
- Out of hours (evenings, weekends and Bank Holidays) contact the Surgical Assessment Unit 01902 695004 or 01902 694004.









## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。