Care of the Drain
Post-Breast Cancer Surgery

What is drain care?

The drain is used after a mastectomy or lymph node removal to drain excess fluid from the surgical site. Your doctor will remove drain when the drainage is at least less than 30cc for 24 hours. Avoid use of deodorants or shower until stitches and drains have been removed and the wound has healed unless otherwise instructed by your surgeon. The following instructions will help you and your caregiver correctly perform drain and suture line care to prevent complications.
Drain site care

Supplies: You can purchase these items from a drug or grocery store.

- 2 pairs of clean rubber or latex exam gloves
- A container for cleansing solution
- Sterile split drain gauzes
- Cotton swabs
- Your physician’s prescribed solution (saline, mild soap and water or alcohol)
**Procedure:**

Always place the bulb lower than the wound to prevent the drainage from flowing backwards when emptying the drain

1. Remove the drain from the pocket and open the Papilla gown. Remove the tubing from the tuck.
   Pull the tubing back through the eyelet of the gown and place a towel under the site catch any spills.

2. Wash hands with soap and warm water and apply gloves. Remove old bandage carefully. Using sterile saline to loosen adhesive if needed. Dispose the old bandages in trash.

3. Pour the prescribed cleaning solution (half normal saline and half peroxide) into the container. Moisten cotton swabs with cleaning solution.

4. Cleanse the wound in a circular motion from inside to the outside. Repeat 3 to 4 times, using a new swab each time.

5. Apply antibacterial ointment if prescribed. Place pre-cut split drain gauze around the top and bottom of the drain site to cover the sire where the drain exits the skin. Cover with tape to seal the gauze.

6. Thread the drainage tubing and bulb back into the gown’s safety pocket. Close the snaps on the front of the gown. Wash hands.
Drain care

Your drain should be emptied when it is half to 2/3 full. This may mean that the bulb needs to be emptied at least every 8-12 hours.

Supplies: You can purchase these items from a drug or grocery store.

- Clean measuring cup
- A pair of clean gloves
- Water proof pad or towel for spill
- A log to record amount of drainage

Procedure: Always place the bulb lower than the wound to prevent backflow.

1. Remove the bulb from pocket of the Papilla Gown. Remove tubing from tuck so that the bulb can be easily handled.
2. Strip tubing by pinching tubing at close to the body with non-dominant hand and use the thumb and first finger of dominant hand strip the tubing toward the collection bulb 2 of 3 times. This is very important to do if you see blood clots or debris in the tubing to prevent blockage of the tube.
3. Wash hands and apply gloves.
4. Remove the stopper and squeeze the collection bulb to pour the drainage into measuring cup.
5. Carefully put the stopper back on while squeezing the bulb tightly to remove all the air.
6. Record amount of fluid. You may also note the color and odor of drainage. Discard the fluid.
7. Place the tubing back into the tucks. Put bulb
into the pocket of the papilla gown and secure with Velcro strips.

**Tell your doctor or nurse if any of the following things happen:**

- Your temperature 101° F (38.3° C) or higher.
- You experience any of the following:
  1. notice increasing pain, redness, or swelling of the incision site,
  2. have foul-smelling drainage,
  3. stitches become loose or break,
  4. drain falls out, or
  5. red streaks appears around the wound.
  6. drainage becomes bloody, after it has not been bloody,
  7. the amounts of drainage increases,
  8. drainage tube becomes plugged and can’t be relieved by stripping tubing, or
  9. you are unable to compress the bulb.

**Emotional supports:** Discuss feelings with your husband or significant other, family, friend, or other individuals who give you support. Also the following support groups are available:

- Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization: [www.y-me.org](http://www.y-me.org)
  24 hour/7 days hotline: 1-800-221-2141

- American Cancer Society: [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)
  Reach to Recovery program: 1-800-ACS-2345
DRAINAGE LOG

Record the drainage from each drain separately, color and presence of bad odor. Please bring this chart with you when you come for your appointment.

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