

Going home with a wound drain after breast surgery

This leaflet explains more about how to care for your wound drain after breast surgery. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is a wound drain?

A wound drain is a long, thin plastic tube put in to help stop fluid building up and reduce swelling. Fluid is drained into a lightweight plastic container.

You may need to go home with a drain in place. This is safe and the nurses on the ward will explain how to care for your drain at home.

The drain will usually be removed after three to five days when the amount of fluid has gone down. You should be given an appointment for this before you leave hospital.

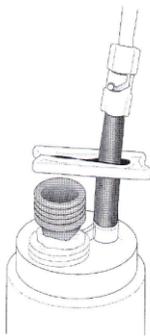
What equipment will I take home with me?

You will be given some dressings, gauze, alcohol wipes and an extra drainage bottle to take home.

How should I look after my wound drain?

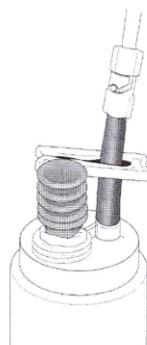
- Keep the area where your drain is dry.
- Take care not to let the drain drag or pull as this may be uncomfortable. Put the drainage bottle into a small plastic bag to make it easier to carry. You could then attach the bag to a belt around your waist.
- You will need to check that the fluid is clear. It can be different colours from dark pink to a yellowish straw colour.
- You should also check the dressing around the drain site every day for any oozing of fluid. You will be given spare dressings to put on top of any drain dressings that come loose.
- Measure the drainage in the bottle each day at the same time, so we can check how much is being drained. Please mark the bottle and write the amount in the chart on page two.
- **Check the green concertina bung is compressed (pressed down)**, which means the vacuum is on and the drain is working. The nurse will show you how to do this, (also see the pictures below). If the bung is raised and moves the bottle will need changing.

1a.



A drain with working suction, the concertina bung is pressed down.

1b.



A drain that has lost suction, the concertina bung is raised.

If you have any of the following, call your breast care nurse (number on page three) or if out of hours, go to the urgent care centre in the emergency department (ED or A&E) straight away:

- sudden swelling at the wound site causing severe pain. This may be caused by blood under the wound or fluid that will not drain, possibly because the drain is blocked. You will need to be seen by a doctor.
- The dressing becomes **heavily** stained with blood (it is normal to have some red or yellow staining).
- The fluid collected in the bottle (drain output) looks like pure blood.
- Excessive pain, oozing, skin redness, swelling, or hardness around the drain site.

Non-urgent problems that you may need advice from the ward or your breast care nurse about:

- the tubing disconnects or the green concertina bung is no longer compressed (see below for instructions about this)
- the bottle becomes full and needs changing (see page three for instructions).

What should I do if the drain falls out?

The drainage tubing may get caught and the drain might be completely pulled out.

If this happens, try not to panic, and do the following:

1. wash your hands and apply pressure to the opening in the skin with a piece of gauze for a few minutes
2. put on a clean dressing
3. call your breast care nurse to let her know (telephone number on page three).

Do not try to push the drain back in yourself as this might cause an infection.

Is there anything to look out for after my drain has been removed?

A collection of fluid (a seroma) may form under your wound after the drain has been removed. This is common and your body normally absorbs the fluid naturally.

If it is a large amount and makes you uncomfortable, contact your breast care nurse so it can be looked at and drained if needed.

How do I record drainage?

Every day, please record the total amount drained in the chart below.

Measure the drainage at the same time each morning and measure the total amount of fluid for that 24 hour period.

Day	Date/time	Fluid Level
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

How do I change my drainage bottle?

If the drain is full or the suction has been lost, you will need to change the drainage bottle.

To do this:

1. clamp off the drainage tube and disconnect the connectors (see figure 2a, below)
2. reconnect the tubing to the new drain and release both clamps (See figure 2b, below)
3. record the drainage in the old bottle if not already recorded
4. bring the old drain back to the Rose centre in a plastic bag for disposal in our clinical waste.

Figure 2a

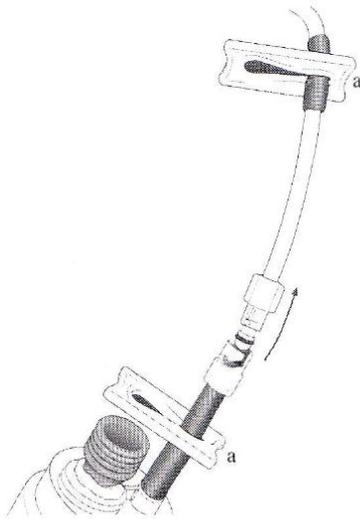
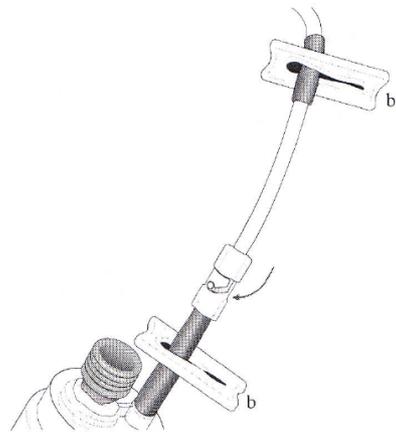


Figure 2b



Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about caring for your wound drain after breast surgery, please contact the breast care nurses Tracey Hall or Jane Thomson on 020 8725 4745 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm), or breast care nurse Ali Woods on 020 8725 1223 (Wednesday to Friday, 9am to 4pm). Out of hours, please go to the urgent care centre in the emergency department (ED or A&E) at the hospital where you are having treatment.

You may also contact Keate ward on 020 8725 3226 or 020 8725 3227 or the breast secretaries on 020 8725 3083 or 020 8725 3082 for help or advice

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

