

# Going home with drains after breast implant surgery

This leaflet explains more about how to care for your wound drain after breast implant 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 plastic tube that is put in during your operation. It goes into a clear vacuum bottle for the fluid which normally builds up at the site of surgery to drain into. A small stitch is put in to hold the tube in place.

## Why do I need to go home with a drain?

Your medical and nursing team have decided it is safe for you to be discharged home with your drain.

You still need your drain as there is still too much fluid for it to be removed yet.

You will need to come back to the hospital to have your drain removed after a few days once the drainage is less than 30-50mls over 24 hours.

## What should I do before I leave hospital?

### Make sure:

**You have someone to drive you home** - and ask them to bring a small cushion or pillow to put under your seat belt to make it more comfortable.

**You have any tablets or medicines you need** - and you know how and when to take them.

**You have been told about your outpatient appointment** and given a copy of your discharge letter from the hospital.

**You have been given spare dressings or gauze** for where the drain goes in – so you can change the dressing if it leaks.

**You have all the telephone contact numbers you need at the hospital.**

## How should I look after my drain?

**Keep the area where your drain is dry.**

**Check the dressing around the drain site** every day to ensure that the dressing is dry. If there is any ooze through the dressing, replace it with one of the spare dressings you have been given.

**Take care not to let the drain drag or pull** as this may be uncomfortable. Put the drainage bottle into a small bag to make it easier to carry. You could then attach the bag to a belt around your waist.

**Regularly check the drain is working** and the green concertina bung at the top of the bottle is pressed down. This shows the vacuum is on and the drain is working. If the green bung is raised or fully expanded this shows the drain is no longer working properly. See the **What should I do if there is a problem** section for advice on what to do if this happens.

## Measuring and recording the drainage

You need to check how much fluid has been drained at the same time every day, so pick a time that will work for you.

Every day at this time, look at the measurements on the side of the bottle, and write down the amount that has drained in the past 24 hours in the grid at the end of this leaflet. You could put some tape along the measurement and mark it with a pen if this helps.

You then need to work out how much fluid has drained in the past 24 hours. To do this, take away the current day's total from the previous day's total, for example:

If one day the bottle reads 210mls and the following day at the same time of day the bottle reads 280mls, take the first reading away from the second reading to find the answer:

280mls – 210mls = 70mls.

So in this case 70mls is the total amount of fluid that has drained in the last 24 hours.

Someone from the hospital will call you each day to find out your 24 hour measurement. If they don't, please contact Keate ward or Plastic Dressing Clinic (PDC) staff using the contact numbers at the end of this leaflet.

When the volume in the drain falls below 30-50mls in a 24 hour period you will need to come back to the hospital to have it removed (community nurses don't normally remove them).

Drain removal is a simple quick procedure and can be done without anaesthetic. To make an appointment, contact one of the team using a number from the end of this leaflet.

## What should I do if I have a problem?

You will only be discharged when the medical and nursing staff decide it is safe for you to go home.

### At home, look out for the following:

**Your drain falling out** – apply a dressing or the gauze you were given to the small wound where the tube was inserted and contact Keate ward or the PDC.

**Your drain disconnecting** – try to be careful when moving around so you don't pull on your drainage tube and accidentally irritate the drain site or dislodge the drain. If the drain disconnects apply gauze to the disconnected end of the tube and contact Keate ward or the PDC.

**Pus or pure blood in the drain** – normal fluid drainage should be yellow/straw coloured or blood-stained. If you notice pure blood or pus in the drain you must contact Keate ward or the PDC.

**Infection** – if you notice redness, increased pain, swelling, heat or discharge around the wound or drain, these could be signs of infection. If this happens get medical attention straight away as an infection could be life threatening and lead to the implant being removed - contact the PDC immediately or go to St George's Emergency Department (ED or A&E) straight away.

**Bottle losing vacuum** – sometimes the drainage bottle may lose vacuum or suction and need to be replaced. If the green concertina bung at the top of the bottle is fully expanded there is no longer any suction and the drain won't work properly. To show suction is working the green bung should be compressed (pressed down). If suction is lost please contact Keate ward or the PDC.

**Large amount of fluid leaking from your drain site** – apply some gauze and pressure over the area and contact Keate ward or PDC.

**Bleeding** – if you have bleeding once you are at home, contact the ward. Try and stop the bleeding by putting firm pressure on the wound for 15 minutes, and if this doesn't work go to the nearest Emergency Department (ED or A&E).

**Tube blockage** – if you notice the drain suddenly stops draining first check the tube is not kinked. If it still won't drain there may be a blockage inside the tube - contact Keate ward or the PDC.

**If you have any of the above issues and can't speak to a nurse please contact your GP or go to St George's Emergency Department (ED or A&E).**

## Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You will be given an appointment to see the PDC nurses about a week after your surgery. The nurses will check your wound and change your dressing. You may need to have your dressing changed again by the PDC nurses and/or your GP practice nurse or district nurse.

As well as a follow up appointment, a nurse from Keate ward or the PDC will call you daily to check the amount of drainage.

You will also be given an appointment to see a consultant four to six weeks after surgery, at the hospital where you first saw one. If you haven't had a consultant appointment through the post by the time of your PDC appointment at St George's, you can arrange one there or you can call the appointments line number below.

## Contact us

On discharge one of the Keate ward or PDC staff should call you every day for an update on the last 24 hours' drainage. Once the drainage reduces to between 30-50mls in a 24 hour period you need to attend the hospital to have the drain removed.

If you are not called, have any concerns or problems or need to make an appointment to have the drain removed please use the following contact details:

From Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm, call the PDC on 020 8725 0473 and leave a message to let us know the amount of drainage or if you have any other issues.

Out of hours, (weekends and bank holidays) contact Keate ward on 020 8725 3226 or 3227.

For appointments please contact 020 8725 5855.

## Grid to record 24 hour drain measurements

Date	Right breast drain	Left breast drain

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://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](mailto: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](http://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

