

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?

During your operation you may have a drain inserted. This is a long, flexible, thin plastic tube designed to prevent fluid collection and reduce swelling. Fluid is drained via the tube into a lightweight plastic container. You may go home with this drain in place. This is safe and will not affect your recovery. The nurses on the ward will explain to you how to care for your drain before going home from hospital.

The drain will usually be removed about three to five days after the operation when the volume of fluid has reduced. You should be given an appointment to attend the breast dressing clinic in the Rose Centre 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 drain site area dry.
- Take care not to let the drain drag or pull as this may cause discomfort. You can put the drainage bottle into a small plastic bag to make it easier to carry with you, or attach the bag or loop to a belt and wear around your waist.
- **Check the green concertina bung is compressed (see example on page 3).** The nurse will show you how to do this. This means that the vacuum is on. If the bung is raised and moves the bottle will need changing.
- Check the fluid. It should be clear and can range in colour from a dark pink to a yellowish straw colour.
- Check the dressing around the site daily for oozing of fluid. You will be given spare dressings to put on top of drain dressings that become loose.
- Measure the drainage in the bottle at the same time every day. This helps us to assess how much the drain has been producing. Mark the bottle and record the reading on the chart provided page 4.

Please call your Breast Care Nurse or attend the Urgent Care Centre located in A&E if out of hours (see number below) as soon as possible if any of the following apply:

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

Non urgent problems that you may need to seek advice from the ward or your breast care nurse

- If the tubing disconnects or the green concertina bung is no longer compressed (Follow instructions page 3).
- If the bottle becomes full and requires changing (Follow instructions page 3).

What should I do if the drain falls out?

Occasionally, the drainage tubing may get caught and the drain can be completely pulled out. Don't panic if this happens, wash your hands and apply pressure to the opening in the skin with a piece of gauze for a few minutes then apply a clean dressing. Call your Breast Care nurse to let her know (telephone number on page 4). Do not attempt to push the drain back in as this may introduce infection.

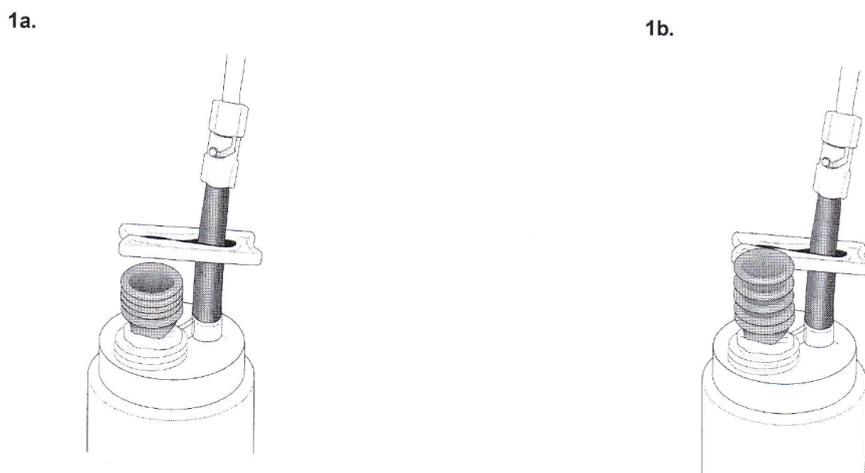
Is there anything to look out for after my drain has been removed?

A collection of fluid called a seroma may develop under the wound once the drain has been removed. This is common and it normally is reabsorbed naturally by your body. However if it is a large amount causing some discomfort contact your Breast Care Nurse so it can be further assessed to see if it requires drainage.

Caring for your drain at home

1. Please measure your drain on a 24-hour basis at the same time every day and record it on the sheet provided.
2. The green concertina part of the drain should remain pressed down (figure 1a). If this has popped out (figure 1b.), it means that the drain has lost its suction and will no longer work effectively.

Figure 1. (1a.) a drain with working suction shown by with its green concertina part pressed down and (1b.) a drain that has lost its suction shown by the expanded concertina part.



How to change your drainage bottle

If the drain is full or if the suction has been lost, you will need to change the drainage bottle as follows:-

- Clamp of the drainage tube and disconnect the male and female connectors (See figure 2a).
- Reconnect the tubing to the new drain and release both clamps (**See figure 2b**)
- Record the drainage in the old bottle if not already recorded.
- Dispose of old drain in the Rose Centre by bringing it back in a plastic bag and we can dispose of it for you in our clinical waste.

Figure 2a

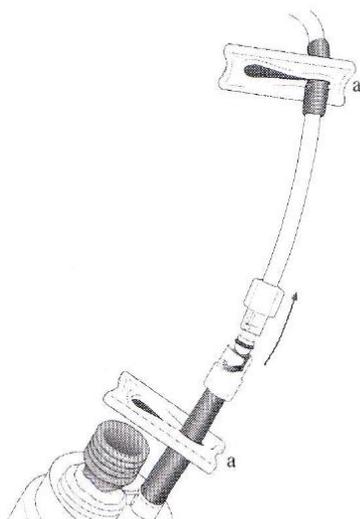
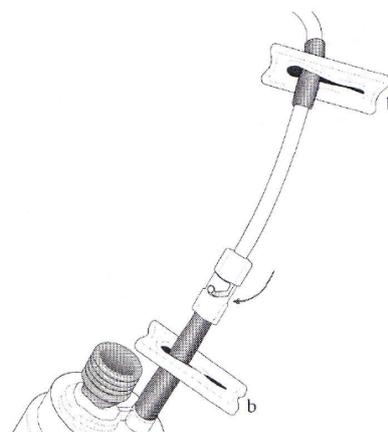


Figure 2b



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		

Contact us

You can contact the Breast Care Nurses, Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 4:00pm.

Tel. 020 8725 4745

If you experience any problems with your drain during the weekend, please go to the Urgent Care Centre Located in A&E at the hospital where you are having treatment when possible.

Other useful numbers

Breast Secretaries 020 8725 3083 / 3082

Breast team junior doctors: switch board 020 8672 1255 (ask for bleep 6594)

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 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (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

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: GES_WDB_02 **Published:** September 2021 **Review date:** September 2023