



# Caring for Your Chest Tube at Home

Your doctor has decided that you are to go home with your chest tube still in place. It will be removed during a visit to the office or clinic when it is no longer needed.

Your chest tube has been attached to a Mini Sahara drainage device. This device allows your chest tube to drain fluid and air from inside your chest. It is a smaller version of the drainage system you may have had during your stay in the hospital.

## Tube and site care

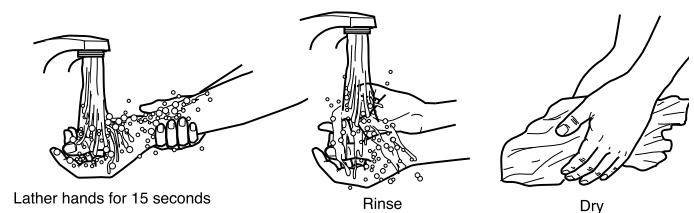
- You need to keep a clean, dry dressing on the site where the chest tube comes out of your body. The dressing should be changed every 3 days or anytime the dressing comes loose or it gets dirty or wet. A good time to change your dressing is right after you take a shower or sponge bath.
- Tape the chest tube to your body below the bandage. This may help prevent pulling on the tube.
- Be sure to keep the tubing free of any bends or kinks. When in bed, you may want to loop the tubing on the bed, so the tubing is not hanging down onto the floor.
- Keep the drainage device lower than your chest tube site at all times. Do not change any of the dials or settings on the device.
- If your chest tube comes out for any reason, put clean gauze over the site and cover the gauze with tape. Call your doctor or health care provider.

- Keep a couple of clamps close by. If your chest tube gets disconnected from the collection device, and cannot be reconnected for any reason, clamp the tube closest to your body with both clamps while you seek help.

## Dressing change

1. Gather your supplies. You will need:
  - Sterile split 4x4 gauze dressing
  - Tape
  - 2 clean washcloths
  - Clean towel
  - Soap and water
  - Plastic bag or trash can
2. Wash your hands well with warm water and soap for at least 15 seconds. Rinse and towel dry. Or, you can clean your hands using an alcohol based hand sanitizer.

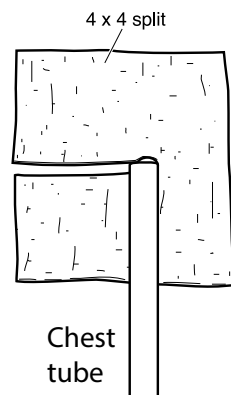
### Handwashing



3. Remove the old dressing. Be careful not to pull out the chest tube. Place the old dressing in the plastic bag or trash can.
4. Wash your hands again.



5. Use the washcloth, wet with warm water and a small amount of soap to clean around the site. Check the skin for any signs of infection. These may include:
  - More redness of the skin at the site
  - Any increase or change in the drainage from the site
  - Skin at the site feels warm to touch
  - Call your doctor or nurse right away if you have any of these signs.
6. Use another washcloth dampened with warm water to rinse the site. Pat the site dry with the clean towel.
7. Remove the gauze dressing from the package. Be careful to only touch the outside edge of the dressing.
8. Place the slit of the dressing around the chest tube at the site.
9. Use tape around the edges to secure the dressing.
10. Wash your hands again.



4. After your shower, dry the tube from close to your body outward with a clean towel. Be careful not to pull on the tube.
5. Remove the tape and plastic wrap. Pat your skin dry with a clean towel. If the dressing is wet, you need to change it.

## Care of the drainage device

Keep the drainage device upright at all times. Be careful that you do not place it where it would get knocked over or crushed.

There will be a holder that the device fits into to hold it upright when you are in bed or sitting at home. You will also have a pouch that you can use to hold the device during the day, so you are able to move around more easily.

You do not need to track the drainage amount in the device.

## Removal of the tube

Your chest tubes should be taken out by your surgeon or their staff at one of your follow-up visits.

Keep a clean dry bandage over the site for 2 to 3 days after the tube is removed. Change the dressing if it gets wet or dirty.

## Call your doctor or nurse if you have:

- Signs of infection at the site, such as redness, swelling, pus, odor or warmth of the skin at the site
- Chest tube drainage that becomes milky or cloudy
- Any questions about your chest tube or Mini Sahara drainage device
- Shortness of breath, chest pain or other signs of breathing problems

## Taking a shower

Take a shower or sponge bathe while the tube is in place. You should not get into a tub bath, hot tub or immerse yourself in water with the chest tube in place. When taking a shower:

1. Cover the dressing with a shower shield or plastic wrap like Saran before you shower. Secure the plastic wrap with tape.
2. Set the drainage device in the holder and leave it outside the shower.
3. Allow the water of the shower to run down across the area, but do not have the water hit the site directly.