Home Care for Your Gravity Fluid Drain

One or more tubes have been placed to drain fluid, so you can heal. A drain tube is put in through your skin into the space where fluid is building up. This decreases swelling, pressure and your chance of infection. The drain tube is held in place by stitches.

The drain tube is attached to a fluid collection bag. The fluid drains into the bag by gravity, so you need to keep the bag below the level where the tube goes into your body.

The drain can stay in place as long as it is needed and working well. The drain will be removed by your doctor when the amount of drainage drops, the color clears, and you have no signs of infection.

General Care

- Keep your drain site clean and dry. If the dressing gets wet or comes loose, change it.

More on next page ➔
• You may shower 48 hours after the drain is put in place. Do not take a tub bath or go swimming while you have the drain. Water could get in around the tube and put you at risk of infection.

• Cover the dressing and the skin around the drain with Press and Seal or plastic wrap before you shower. Tape the plastic wrap to help keep water from getting the dressing wet.

• Check your temperature each day while the drain is in place. Write your temperature in the drainage record on page 7 of this handout. Call your doctor if your temperature is more than 101 degrees F or 38 degrees C.

**How to Empty Your Drain Bag**

Your drainage collection bag should be emptied in the morning and in the evening. If your bag is heavy with fluid, you may empty it more often. If you have more than one drain, you will need to empty each bag and record the drainage amount from each bag.

**Steps to follow:**

1. Gather your supplies:
   - Measuring cup
   - Drainage record
   - Pen or pencil to write amount on record

2. Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds. Rinse with clean water and towel dry.

3. Loosen the belt, safety pins or clip that holds the drain bag to your clothing.

4. Hold the drain bag over the measuring cup to empty the drainage into the cup.

5. Open the valve on the bottom of the bag to let the fluid come out. Turn the blue valve to the left or counter clockwise.

6. Once the bag is empty, put the bag on a sink or table. Press down on the bag until it is flat.

7. When the bag is flat, close the valve on the bottom of the bag by turning it to the right or clockwise.
8. Pin the drain bag to your clothing lower than the place where the tube comes out of your body. If you have a cloth pouch, place the bag in it and attach it to your clothing.

9. Look on the side of the cup to measure the drainage. Check the drainage color and smell. If you notice a foul odor like rotten eggs, call your doctor or nurse.

10. Write the date and time, amount, color and smell of drainage in the drainage record. If you have more than one drain in place, mark one "A" and the other "B". Write the amount of drainage from each on the record.

11. Empty the drainage in the toilet. Rinse the measuring cup with clean water. Let it air dry.

12. Wash your hands again with soap and water.

**How to Change the Dressing**

You are to change your dressing around your tube or tubes each day. You will also need to change the dressing if it gets wet, dirty or comes loose. The dressing helps to protect your drain site and keeps it clean.

**Steps to follow:**

1. Prepare a work space by cleaning the surface with soap and water. Let it air dry.

2. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 15 seconds. Rinse with clean water and towel dry.

3. Gather your supplies:
   - Liquid antibacterial soap like Dial
   - 2, 2x2 gauze pads or 2 packages of split 4x4 gauze dressing
   - Tape
   - Plastic trash bag

4. Loosen the tape and remove the old dressing from around the drain. Be careful not to pull on the tube.

5. Look at the old dressing for any change or foul smell to the drainage.

6. Put the old dressing in a plastic bag and throw it away.
7. Wash your hands again with warm water and soap for at least 15 seconds.

8. Look for any redness or drainage where the tube comes out of your body. If you have these problems or skin irritation, call your doctor or nurse.

9. Take one small gauze pad that is moist with water and add a little soap. Use the pad to clean around the tube. Begin cleaning where the tube comes out of your skin, called the exit site. Use a circular motion and clean the skin 3 to 4 inches away from the exit site. Do not clean back towards the tube.

10. Use a second small gauze pad that is moist with water only and clean around the tube again.

11. Let the area dry. If you have two drains, get 2 more small gauze pads and clean around the other tube the same way.

12. Tear off three pieces of tape about 5 6 inches long.

13. Remove one of the 4 x 4 split gauze square dressing from the package. Touch only the edges of the dressing. Put the gauze around the drainage tube(s) as in the picture.

14. Use the second split gauze dressing to cover the tube as shown.
15. Tape the gauze in place. Use 3 pieces of tape as shown in the following diagrams.

16. Loop the tube around so it is not kinked and tape it to the dressing. This will prevent it pulling.

**How to Flush Your Drain**

- You are **not** to flush your drain.
- You are to flush your drain with ______ ml of normal saline every ______ hours. The flush helps to keep the drainage thinned, so it comes out more easily.

**Steps to follow:**

1. Gather your supplies
   - 10 ml sterile saline syringe(s)
   - Alcohol pad

2. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 15 seconds. Rinse with warm water. Towel dry your hands.
3. Use the alcohol pad to clean the flushing port on the tube at the connector.

4. Remove the cap from the end of the syringe.

5. Attach the syringe to the port.

6. Push the plunger of the syringe slowly to put the saline in the drain. **If you feel pressure and it is hard to push the saline in, stop. Call your doctor or nurse.**

7. If you are to flush with more than 10 ml, remove the first syringe and attach another full syringe to the port. Repeat step 6.

8. Remove the syringe from the port.

9. Throw away the empty syringe.

10. Wash your hands again and towel dry.

**Call your doctor or nurse if you have:**

- A sudden increase in the drainage of more than 30 ml.
- A sudden drop of 30 ml or more in the amount of drainage.
- A change in the smell of the drainage, especially if a "rotten egg" smell is noticed.
- Redness greater than the size of a dime or unusual drainage around the tube.
- No drainage or there is fluid leaking from around the tube. This may mean there is a clot in the tubing.
- Swelling around the tube.
- The fluid collection bag will not stay pressed together after you have emptied it. There may be an air leak in the drain or the bag.
- Fever of more than 101 degrees F or 38 degrees C.
- New or more pain where the tube exits the skin.
- The drain tube pulls out of your skin. Cover the site with gauze dressing and call your doctor or nurse. Place the tube in a plastic bag so your doctor or nurse can check it when they see you.
Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have any questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.