

Caring For Your Surgical Drain

Surgical drains remove fluid from under your skin near your surgical site. This helps prevent infection and encourages healing. Caring for your surgical drain involves keeping the tube clear and emptying the fluid that collects in the bulb. These instructions will teach you how to care for your surgical drain. Follow the instructions below.

Things You Will Need:

- Alcohol wipes
- Measuring cup
- Drainage record sheet
- Disposable gloves
(if your health care provider says you should)

Stripping the Drain



Be careful not to pull on the tubing.

You should not feel any tugging where the tube enters your skin.

Step 1

Wash your hands with soap and water, and then dry them.

Step 2

Put on disposable gloves if your health care provider says you should.

Step 3

Look for clots or blockages that may prevent the fluid from flowing out of the tube and into the bulb.

Step 4

Loosen the clots by gently squeezing the tube surrounding them.

Step 5

Use one hand to hold the drain tube in place where it leaves your skin.

Step 6

Use your other hand to pinch the tube with an alcohol wipe between your finger and thumb.

Step 7

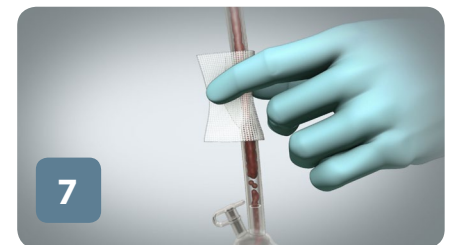
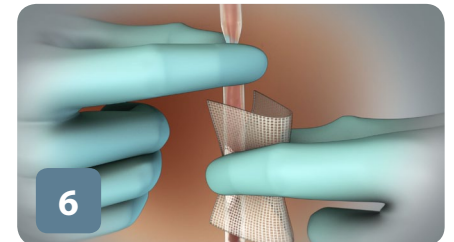
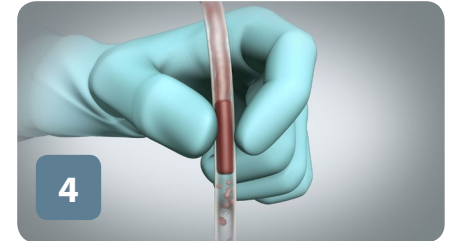
Slide your pinched fingers along the tube to force any fluid out of the tube and into the bulb.

You may need to repeat steps five through seven several times to clear the tube.



Try not to let go of the tube between steps.

If fluid remains in the tube, or you accidentally let go, repeat steps five through seven using a new alcohol wipe.



Emptying the Bulb



Do not allow the bulb to become more than half-full. Too much fluid in the bulb reduces its ability to remove fluid from underneath your skin.

Step 8

Hold the bulb lower than your incision so that fluid moves out of the tube and into the bulb.

Step 9

Point the bulb away from your body.



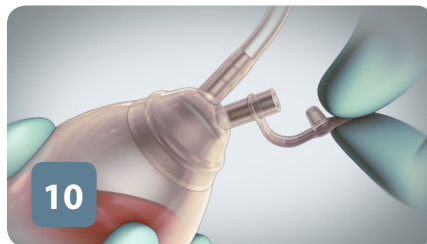
Never squeeze the bulb before taking the cap off.

Step 10

Remove the cap.

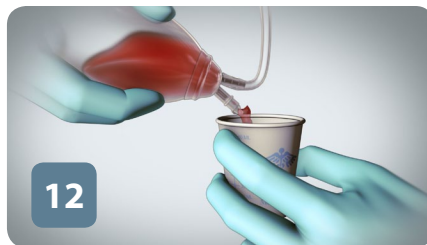


Never touch the opening with your bare hands.



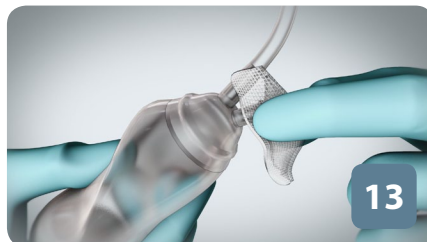
Step 11

Hold the measuring cup under the bulb.



Step 12

Turn the bulb upside down and squeeze the fluid into the cup.



Step 13

After removing the fluid, continue squeezing the bulb, and use a new alcohol wipe to clean the top.

Step 14

While still squeezing the bulb, put the cap back on the top. The depressed bulb creates suction that continuously removes fluid from underneath your skin.



Step 15

Read the amount of fluid in the measuring cup.

Step 16

Write the amount on your record sheet.

Step 17

Empty and rinse the cup as directed.



Keep the bulb below the level of your incision to help the fluid move out of the tube and into the bulb.



Call your surgeon if you notice:

- **Sudden** increase or decrease in fluid amount
- **Change** in fluid odor
- **Fluid** contains pus
- **Fluid** becomes thicker over time
- **Tube** falls out, or incision opens
- **Incision** is red, swollen, painful, or contains pus
- **Temperature** is 101° F or higher

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This handout is intended to supplement the information you receive from your healthcare provider. This information should never be considered personal medical advice. Always contact your healthcare provider with questions or concerns.



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Your Surgical Drain Record



TIPS

- Empty the bulb at least 2 times per day.
- Do not allow the bulb to become more than half-full.
- Read the amount of fluid in the measuring cup, and write the amount (output) on your record sheet.
- Contact your doctor with questions or concerns.

Patient Name

Time	Drain 1	Drain 2	Drain 3	Drain 4
Time _____	Output _____ cc's	Output _____ cc's	Output _____ cc's	Output _____ cc's
Time _____	Output _____ cc's	Output _____ cc's	Output _____ cc's	Output _____ cc's
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