

Going home with a redivac drain after breast surgery

This leaflet explains more about going home with a redivac drain following your surgery. If you have any further questions, please speak to the nurse or doctor caring for you.

What is a drain?

A drain is a thin PVC tube that is placed in the cavity (hole) created when tissue is removed during surgery. Its purpose is to remove the fluid that collects after an operation from your body. The end of the tubing that is outside your body will be attached to a plastic measuring bottle similar to the one shown in this booklet.

Why do I need a drain?

Following surgery to the breast and/or underarm, a wound drain may be inserted. This helps to prevent a build up of fluid, called a seroma, from forming and causing swelling. The wound drain will also minimise any bruising to the area. It is quite normal for you to go home with a drain and look after this yourself with the right level of support. The drain will normally stay in for around five to seven days, but may be needed for longer, depending on how much fluid is being drained each day.

How does the drain work?

An active (vacuum) drain uses gentle suction. When the suction in the bottle is active, the red vacuum indicator on the top is in a downward (pressed) position.

The colour of the fluid can be observed through the bottle, and this is of importance to the surgeon. As the area heals the amount of fluid collected lessens until it is low enough for the drain to be removed.

Measuring and changing the drain

During your hospital stay, the amount of fluid collected in your drain will be measured and recorded at the same time every night. A mark will be drawn on the bottle each night to show the level of the fluid. Your nurse will show you how to care for your drain and also how to record the measurements on a chart so that you can monitor the output at home.

To make this easy for you, the bottle has a measuring scale printed on it. Once you are at home, you can measure the fluid level each morning at a time that is convenient for you. **It is important that the fluid level is measured at the same time each day.**

You will be provided with a spare drainage bottle and some antiseptic wipes. Your nurse will show you how to change the bottle if required. There are three reasons why your bottle may need changing at home:

1. If the bottle is full
2. If the red vacuum indicator is completely expanded indicating no suction left.
3. If the tubing has become disconnected.

Record of redivac drainage over 24 hours

You can use this chart to record the amount of fluid in the drainage bottle every day.

Day	Amount	Time of recording
1	mls	
2	mls	
3	mls	
4	mls	
5	mls	
6	mls	
7	mls	
8	mls	

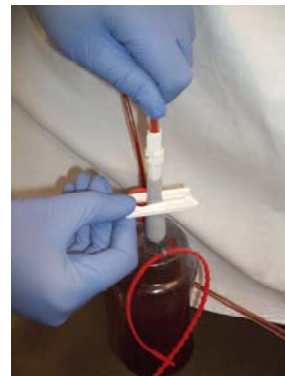
Changing your drainage bottle

The steps below give instructions on how to change your bottle. A nurse will demonstrate this for you before you are discharged from hospital.

1. Close the clip on the tubing.



2. Close the clip to the bottle.



3. Disconnect the tube from the bottle by unscrewing the luer lock.



4. Screw on the new bottle. Make sure it is on tightly as loose connections can lead to loss of suction.



5. Open the clip on the tubing.



6. Open the clip on the bottle. White tape can be used to mark the drainage output.



Possible problems

If the following problems occur, **please do not panic**. Just follow the advice below:

- **If the drain falls out**, simply place the pad provided over the small wound where from the drain was inserted, secure the pad with tape and telephone the ward. Please do not dispose of the tubing or the bottle – you will need to bring them with you to the ward. Usually the tubing will have a stitch in it to prevent it from falling out.
- **If your tubing becomes disconnected anywhere**, place the pad provided over the tube coming from the operation area, secure it with tape and contact the ward for advice. You will need to bring the bottle and tubing with you when you return to the ward.
- **If you have excess leakage from the area where the drain comes from**, cover it with the pad, secure with some tape and contact the ward.

If you are concerned about any redness, swelling, bruising, and/or pain that you may have, please contact the ward or breast care nursing team for advice.

Removal of the drain

The drain will be removed when the fluid collected is clear and is equal to or less than 50mls in a 24 hour period.

Before you are discharged from hospital, a plan will have been put in place for the removal of the drain once the volume of drainage has reduced. This is usually arranged with a breast care nurse or, if appropriate, the ward nurses will make necessary arrangements for you to attend the breast clinic.

Tips

- Clothing that opens at the front is generally easier to wear while you have your drain in.
- Ensure there are no kinks in the tubing.
- A small, comfortable pillow tucked under your arm (while you sleep or travel) may help to take pressure off the drain tubes and operation site.

Your appointment for review in the breast clinic:

Date:.....

Contact us

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact the Breast Care Nurses on **020 7188 0869** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

For advice and support during evenings and weekends, please telephone Sarah Ward on **020 7188 5992** or **020 7188 8869**. You may be advised to come to the ward for further assessment.

Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals offer a range of cancer-related information leaflets for patients and carers, available at www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/cancer-leaflets. For information leaflets on other conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets



Dimbleby Cancer Care provides cancer support services for Guy's and St Thomas'. We have a drop-in information area staffed by specialist nurses and offer complementary therapies, psychological support and benefits advice for patients and carers.

Dimbleby Cancer Care is located in the Welcome Village of the Cancer Centre at Guy's. **t:** 020 7188 5918 **e:** DimblebyCancerCare@gstt.nhs.uk

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the clinical nurse specialist or other member of staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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