

# Care of Your Surgical Drain(s)

South Shore Regional  
Hospital

It is important that you arrive on time for your appointment. If you need to cancel or reschedule your appointment, please call your surgeon's office:

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



# Care of Your Surgical Drain(s)

## What is a surgical drain?

- A surgical drain is a tube that is connected to a collection device (a small plastic bulb). After surgery, a tube is placed in your incision (cut) to remove fluid. You may have more than one drainage system depending on your surgery. This helps you to heal and lowers the risk of infection.
- You will see fluid and blood in the drain(s). You may feel some burning and pulling from the stitch holding the tubing to your skin.
- The drain(s) and tubing are usually removed when the fluid is less than 30 cc (2 tablespoons) a day. This is often done during your follow-up appointment with your surgeon.

## Care of your tube at home

There will be a gauze dressing over the insertion site of the tube. **It is important to keep this clean and protect the insertion site from infection.** Keep the drain bulb pinned loosely to the inside of your shirt or pyjamas.

## Emptying the drain(s)

**Important:** Always wash your hands before and after you empty your drain(s).

Be careful not to touch the inside of the cap or the end of the bulb. Hold the bulb gently and pull out the plug next to the tube.

- Turn the bulb upside down and squeeze the contents carefully into a small container. A small plastic container works well and may be given to you before you leave the hospital.
- Firmly squeeze the bulb together until the sides touch in the middle to remove the air. Put the plug back in the bulb cap to close the drain system.
- Measure the volume (how much) of the fluid in ccs or millilitres. Write down:
  - › the volume.
  - › the colour.
  - › whether the fluid is clear or cloudy.
  - › if there is a smell.
- Keep this record and bring it to your follow-up appointment with your surgeon.
- Do this 2 times a day, or more often if the bulb fills more than halfway with fluid.

**Call your primary health care provider or your surgeon right away if you have any of the following:**

- Fever (temperature above 38.5° C/101.3° F)
- Redness or a lot of swelling around where the tube goes into your body
- Fluid that is thick or smells bad
- More drainage over time instead of less
- Drainage from the incision, that does not go through the tube
- The bulb will not stay flat after you squeeze the sides together and put the plug back in
- Your pain is not helped by over-the-counter pain pills (like Tylenol®, Advil®, etc.)

**If you cannot reach your primary health care provider or your surgeon, go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.**

# Drain Bulb(s) Record

Write down the amount of fluid from the bulb(s) each time you empty the drain(s). Bring this record with you to your surgeon.

DRAIN #1 Morning - Afternoon - Evening					
Date	Time	Amount	Amount	Amount	Total

DRAIN #2 Morning - Afternoon - Evening					
Date	Amount	Amount	Amount	Amount	Total



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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.