

Caring for Your T-Tube, Hemovac, or Jackson-Pratt® Drain

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Caring for Your T-Tube, Hemovac, or Jackson-Pratt® Drain

Most people are able to care for their incision (cut) and surgical drain on their own or with the help of a support person. This pamphlet will help you learn how to care for your drain at home.

What is a T-Tube drain?

- A T-Tube drain is a tube shaped like the letter T. It is put in your bile duct to drain bile while the duct heals. The tube connects to a bag that holds the bile. A T-Tube drain can be left in for 10 days or more.
- Before your drain is taken out, you will have an X-ray to make sure:
 - › the duct is healed.
 - › any bile stones are gone (if you had them). If you still have stones, they will be taken out through the drain.
- When you go home, the drain may be closed. If it is not closed, it will be attached to a bag.

What are Hemovac and Jackson-Pratt® drains?

- Hemovac drains are tubes that are connected to collection containers. Jackson-Pratt® drains are tubes that are connected to bulbs.
- Usually the container/bulb is squeezed to create suction. Suction removes fluid made by your body during surgery.
- The drain will be placed near or in your incision to help it heal and lower the risk of infection. You will see fluid and blood in the drain and in the container/bulb.
- You may feel burning and pulling from the stitch that is holding the drain to your skin.
- You will need to write down the amount of drainage in the container/bulb each day (see page 8). The drain is usually removed when there is less than 30 cc (2 tsp) of fluid a day. Bring the chart on page 8 with you to your follow-up appointment.
- If you have a T-Tube drain or a Hemovac and Jackson-Pratt drain, you may choose to attach the container/bulb to your clothes using a safety pin. This will prevent the drain from getting caught or pulled out.
 - › Attach the pin to the inside hem of your shirt below your incision and dressing.

- › Make sure the tube is not kinked and has enough length so you can move around easily. Most of the tube should be inside your shirt. Ask your nurse to show you how to do this.

Caring for your incision site

- If you have stitches or staples, they will be taken out 7 to 14 days (1 to 2 weeks) after your surgery.
 - › They may be taken out by your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or by your surgeon. Your health care team will talk with you about this.
 - › After your stitches or staples are removed, Steri-Strips™ may be placed on the incision. If they do not fall off on their own, you can remove them after 7 to 10 days.

Caring for your tube site

- You will have a bandage over the area where the tube enters the incision. This is to protect the area from infection.
 - › Change your bandage every _____ days, or as needed (if your bandage falls off, becomes loose, soiled, or wet).

Bathing

- **You can take a bath as long as you keep your incision and tube sites out of the water.** You can get these sites wet when your incision is healed and the drain is removed.
- **Do not** soak in a bathtub, a hot tub, or a pool until your incision is fully healed.
- Before going home, ask a member of your health care team when you can take a shower.

Call your surgeon's office or your primary health care provider if you have:

- › Pain, swelling, or fluid around the tube
- › Redness or warmth around the incision
- › Fluid from the incision
- › Fluid from the drain that has a bad smell
- › Drainage that changes colour from light pink to bright red
- › Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach) or vomiting (throwing up)
- › A fever
(temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
- › Chills
- › Stitches holding the drain that are loose, or pain, redness, or warmth around the stitches
- › A drain that falls out

How do I empty the drain?

Before you go home, your nurse will teach you how to empty and measure the fluid coming from your drain.

Remember:

- Wash your hands for **at least** 20 seconds with soap and water **before and after** emptying your drain.
- Empty your drain at least 3 times a day. You can empty it more often, if needed.
- Measure the amount of fluid in the drain. We will give you a measuring cup for this.
- Write down the amount of drainage on the chart on page 8.
 - › Remember to bring the chart with you to your follow-up appointment.

If you have a T-Tube drain:

1. Remove the rubber cap on the bottom of the bag.
2. Drain the fluid into the measuring cup.
3. Put the rubber cap back on the bottom of the bag.

If you have a Hemovac drain:

1. Lift the cork. The drain will expand (get bigger).
2. Turn the drain upside down to drain the fluid into the measuring cup.
3. Place the collection container on a hard surface.
4. Press down on the collection container until it is flat.
5. Replace the cork.

Note: Never put anything in the drain to clean it.

If you have a Jackson-Pratt® drain:

1. Lift the stopper.
2. Drain the fluid into the measuring cup.
3. Squeeze the bulb with your hands until air comes out.
4. Close the opening.

Note: Never put anything in the drain to clean it.

Changing your dressings

Only change the dressings on your incision site and tube site when needed.

Supplies:

- Normal saline (salt water)
 - Medical tape
 - 2 gauze pads (2-inch)
 - 4 gauze pads (4-inch)
 - Cotton swabs
 - Other:
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1. Wash your hands well.
2. Remove the old bandage.
3. **Wash your hands again.** Dry them well.
4. Wet a cotton swab with normal saline. Clean around the incision site and the tube site.
5. Put a new bandages on the incision site and on the tube site. Make sure the bandages cover the incision and the drain.

Note: You may need to cut the bandage to fit it around the tube.

6. Use medical tape to keep the bandages in place.

My drainage chart

[illegible]

My drainage chart

[illegible]

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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