



Surgical breast drain

How to care for your breast drain at home

You have received this fact sheet because you will be going home from hospital with a surgical breast drain. You will be cared for by the Hospital in the Home (HITH) team at the Women's. This fact sheet explains how to care for your breast drain at home with support from the HITH team.

What is a surgical breast drain?

A surgical breast drain consists of a small, soft tube connected to a hard bottle. We place the tube near your wound during surgery.

The drain gently pulls blood and fluid away from the wound. This helps to:

- reduce swelling
- lower the risk of complications (such as fluid build-up)
- support the healing process.

The drain is temporary - we will remove it once the amount of fluid draining from your wound has reduced.

Who will support you at home?

While your drain is in place, the Hospital in the Home (HITH) team will care for you.

A nurse from the team will visit you at home once every day. They will:

- check your drain and make sure it is working properly
- record the amount of fluid in the bottle
- check your wound
- answer any questions you may have.

The HITH team will visit you each day for as long as you have the drain in. They will also keep in touch with your surgical team about your progress.

How to care for yourself at home

Before you leave the hospital, your bedside nurse will give you a new drain bottle. They will explain how to care for the drain and how to change the bottle.

In general, we recommend not lifting your elbow above shoulder height while the drain is in place. Your doctor and physiotherapist will talk to you more about which arm movements to avoid after surgery.

You can shower with the drain in place, as the tubing and bottle are waterproof. After showering, gently pat the drain site dry with a clean towel.

What should the fluid in your drain look like?

It is normal for the fluid in your drain to become lighter in colour as your body heals.

In the first few days after surgery, the fluid will likely be dark red. Over time, the colour should become rose in colour. The amount of fluid should also slowly decrease each day.

When can your drain come out?

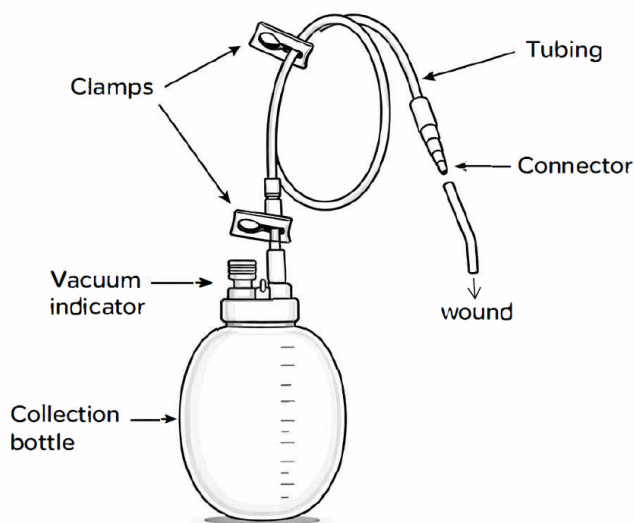
Your drain may stay in place for up to 2 weeks, depending on how much fluid is draining. Your HITH nurse will check the amount each day and let you know when it can be removed.

Your nurse will remove the drain at home. It is simple to do and should not be painful.

Changing the drain bottle

You may need to change the drain bottle yourself at home. This may be because:

- the bottle becomes full
- the bottle and tubing become disconnected
- the bottle loses suction
 - if this happens, the vacuum indicator on the bottle will be pushed out (see picture below).



We explain how to change the drain bottle below. If you are unsure or have any difficulty, please ask your HITH nurse for advice.

Step 1: Get ready

- Wash your hands.
- Place your old bottle on a flat surface.
- Open the packaging of the new bottle – it is important to keep the new bottle clean.

Step 2: Remove the old bottle

- Close the two clamps – one is on the tubing and one is at top of the old bottle.
- Unscrew the connector from the tubing that is attached to your wound – this will remove the old bottle.

Step 3: Connect the new bottle

- Attach the tubing from your wound to the new bottle by screwing it to the connector.
 - It is important to keep the tubing clean and not touch the connector.

Step 4: Unclamp the new drain

- Open up the clamp on the tubing and the clamp at the top of the bottle.
 - It is important that you do not forget this step – the drain will not work if the clamps are closed.

Step 5: Check the suction

- Finally, you need to check that the bottle has suction.
 - You can do this by checking the vacuum indicator is pushed in.

Step 6: Storing the old bottle

- Keep the old bottle in a safe place and show your HITH nurse at their next visit.
 - This helps the nurse measure how much fluid has drained over the past 24 hours.

When to get help?

You should contact your HITH nurse or healthcare team if you notice any of the following:

- large amounts of fresh blood draining into the bottle
- increasing swelling around the drain site
- redness and increasing pain around the drain site
- fluid leaking from where the drain goes into the skin – especially if the amount of fluid is increasing
- you feel feverish or unwell.

If you need urgent help, please call Triple Zero (000) or go to your local Emergency Department.

For more information

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your HITH team. You can call any time of the day or night.

We will give you their contact details when you leave the hospital. You can write these below:

Contact details:

If you are unable to contact your HITH team (and it is not an emergency), please contact the Breast Care Nurses at the Royal Women's Hospital.

Hours: 8 am - 4.30 pm (Monday to Friday)

T: (03) 8345 3565

Do you need an interpreter?



You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

Family Violence Support

1800 Respect National Helpline

You can get help if you have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

You can call any time of day or night.

1800 737 732

1800respect.org.au