

Where quality matters

Breast Unit
 Lower Lane
 Liverpool L9 7AL
 Tel:0151-529-4089

Going Home after Breast Surgery with a Drain in place

Introduction

After breast or armpit (axillary node) surgery, wound drains are placed in the wound to remove blood, secretions and other tissue fluids to promote healing.

It is quite normal after surgery to have one or two drains in place. This is to prevent the build up of fluid around the wound.

These drains usually stay in place until the amount of fluid drained over a 24-hour period is around 50mls. This may take up to 7 days or in some cases longer depending on surgery.

Going home with a drain

Since many women feel so well after their operation, it has now become accepted practice in most hospitals for you to go home with your drain still in place.

Before you are discharged, your nurse will give you full instructions about caring for your drain and will also check you are confident in looking after the drain.

Once you are home

The Breast Link Nurse Specialist or a District Nurse will visit you the day after you are discharged. They will check your wound, care for the drain and record the drainage.

If you are managing, the Breast Link Nurse may not call every day. They will let you know when they will call again to see you and they will leave a contact number in case any problems arise.

The Breast Link Nurse will remove your drain once it has drained 50mls or less in 24 hours.

Pain or discomfort

The nursing staff will advise you about painkillers before you leave the hospital. Please tell the nurses what painkilling tablets you have at home. When you go home, you may need to take some painkillers for a few days.

If you get any severe pain or feelings you are worried about, please contact the ward as soon as possible.

Please remember that any pain would be the same whether you were in hospital or at home. Please contact your family doctor (GP) if you have any severe pain.

If you have a problem with your wound or drain, please contact the Breast Unit.

Incidence of Seroma

Sometimes, after the removal of your drain, a pocket of fluid called a seroma can collect under your chest wall or arm. If this happens, this is normal. Contact your Breast Care Nurse, who will arrange for you to have it drained.

It is a very simple procedure, and you will not have to stay in hospital afterwards. This may happen on a few occasions.

What should I do if the drain falls out?

- Place a dressing (provided by the ward) over the small wound.

Ensure your hands are clean before you touch the area.

- Put the drain in a bag for the nurse who will call the next day.
- Contact the Breast Unit or ward for advice if needed.

What should I do if the drain leaks?

- This may happen as the drain is held in place by a stitch.
- Place the dressings provided by the ward over the drain site, and contact The Breast unit.

Caring for your drain

- Keep your drain well secured with tape, as instructed by your nurse
- Wash normally, but if you have a dressing on, avoid soaking the dressing.
- Do not let the drainage bag drag, as this will pull on the drain and cause pain.
- Check the suction is working as instructed by your nurse.

To empty and put suction back on:
First check the amount that is in the bag.

1. Close inlet clamp
2. Open outlet clamp
3. Compress bulb
4. Close outlet clamp
5. Open inlet clamp

Further information:

If you have any questions regarding your drain following your clinic visit(s) you can obtain further information from:

Aintree Breast Unit:

0151 529 4089

Or

0151 529 4082 (24 hours answer machine)

Breast Cancer Care:

Tel: 0808 800 600

www.breastcancercare.org.uk



If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, on audio tape or disk and in other languages on request. Please contact the Equality and Diversity Department on:

0151 529 4969

Aintree University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is not responsible for the content of any material referenced in this leaflet that has not been produced and approved by the Trust.