

While you are in the hospital, your nurse will care for your drains. After discharge, this is your job.

What is draining?

- Fluid that accumulates at your surgery site. This fluid will be watery red for a couple of days, but should gradually change to a straw color.

What is holding the drain in place?

- There is one stitch holding each drain in place.

What should I do with the dressing around the drain insertion site?

- The bandage around the drain insertion site is called a “drain sponge”. Its job is to catch any drainage that leaks around the tube. You should change it daily, or when it is wet.

How do I care for my drain insertion site?

- Gently remove any discharge from around the drain tube. Keep the insertion site as dry as possible.

Where do I put the drain bulb?

- You will be given a garment with pockets to hold the drain bulb. You can also wear your own clothes and pin the tab on the bulb to your clothes.

How do I make sure the drains are working?

- “Strip” or “milk” the tubing to release any clotty threads that accumulate. Do this at least twice a day. It is important that the bulb remain compressed and plugged at rest.

How do I empty the drains?

- Wash your hands before and after emptying a drain.
- Open the top of the bulb, and empty the contents into the cup provided.
- While compressing the sides of the bulb, close the top.
- Measure and record the fluid that comes out of each drain separately.
- Discard the fluid in the toilet and rinse the cup.

How often should I empty the drains?

- At least twice a day. You should also empty the drain if it becomes over half full.

What restrictions do I have while the drains are in?

- If you had reconstruction, do not lift your arm above shoulder level until the drains are removed. If not, you may move the arm as tolerated.
- Do not use deodorant or shave your underarm on the side of the drains until they are removed.
- Do not drive with drains in.

When will the drains be removed?

- A drain is ready to be removed when it shows less than **30cc** in a 24 hour period for two consecutive days. For most people, this occurs between 5 days and 2 weeks post-operatively. If you had reconstruction, your plastic surgeon may require less than **20cc**.

Call your surgeon's office when one or more drains are ready to come out. If you had reconstruction, you should call your plastic surgeon. If not, call your breast surgeon.