

Spine & Brain

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Postop Instructions for Drain Management at Home

Thank you for letting us provide your surgical care. We sometimes send you home with drains left in place in your wound. The purpose of the drain is to collect fluid from within the surgery site and decrease the chance of a symptomatic fluid collection.

There are two parts to the drain: a soft plastic tube that is tunneled out through a separate small incision away from the main part of the wound, and a bulb that is compressible. The soft plastic tube is held in place to the skin with sutures that you will be able to see, and the bulb has a safety pin on it that allows you to attach it to your clothes.

While you have drains in place, do not take a bath or a hot tub, but you may shower with the drains in place. Take the dressings off the drain site and allow the water to bounce off the area where the drain is, then dab the area dry with a towel and apply a new dressing over the drain site. Avoid prolonged exposure of the drain site to the water.

Change the dressing daily with a gauze and tape dressing. When removing the dressing, make sure first that the dressing is not stuck to the drains and avoid pulling on the drain tubes while removing the dressing. If the drain comes out partially, you can leave it in place and apply a dressing over it. If the drain comes out partially it will no longer hold suction in the bulb when you compress the bulb. If the drain comes out completely, simply place the drain in a plastic bag, and save it for us to look at when you attend the clinic.

We want to know how much the drains are draining, so when you empty the bulb, please record the output, and write the time and date on a piece of paper. The bulb has measuring lines on it so you can use that to measure the volume in the bulb before you empty it. After you have emptied the bulb, compress the bulb, and place the stopper back in the drain.

We will arrange to see you in the clinic to remove the drains. If you live a long way from our offices, we can see if a provider closer to your home is comfortable to do this for us, but this is sometimes not possible.

Thank you again for letting us provide your surgical care, and please do not hesitate to contact us at 715-843-1000 or via the patient portal at spineandbraingroup.com.