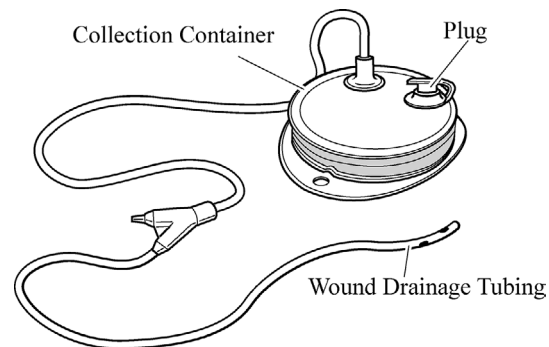
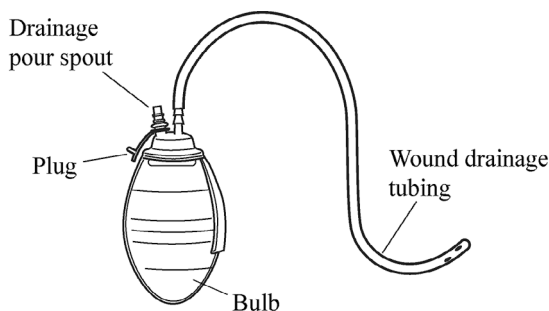


Removing Your Surgical Drain After Head and Neck Surgery

As you go home after your head and neck surgery, you may have one or more drains in place to help your wounds heal. **Hemovac, Jackson Pratt (JP) and Blake** are common drains used for wounds. Some drains have a squeezable container connected to flexible tubing. The tubing is put into an area near your surgical incision. It is held in place by stitches. When the drain is pressed flat, a gentle suction helps remove fluid from the wound.

Your doctor has agreed to allow you to remove your surgical drain at home. **You should only remove your drain after meeting with and receiving approval from your doctor for this procedure to be done at home.** Your healthcare team will teach you how to remove your drain before being discharged from the hospital. If you have questions or concerns about removing your drain at home, please contact your healthcare provider's office for further instruction.

Wound Drainage Systems



This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

Where is my drain located?

Most often, your drain will be located in your neck. Some drains may also be located in your leg or arm depending on your type of surgery. Before discharge from the hospital, your healthcare provider will show you which drains you will be removing at home.

How will I know when my drain is ready to be removed?

Your drain is ready to be removed when it has drained less than 30 cc (or milliliters/mL) of fluid in the last 24 hours. If your drain has put out more than 30 cc of fluid in the last 24 hours, your drain is NOT ready to be removed.

For step-by-step instructions on how to empty and measure your drain output, please refer to the handout: "[Home Care for Your Wound Drain](#)".

If the drain is taken out too soon, fluid can collect under the skin and the fluid will need to be removed in the clinic. If you have questions or concerns about removing your drain, please contact your healthcare provider's office.

How to Remove Your Drain

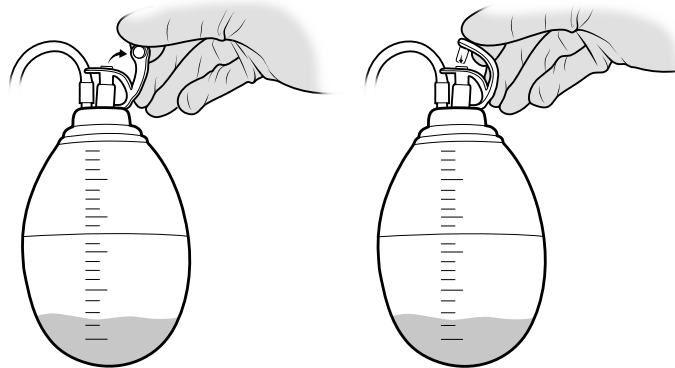
Your healthcare team will give you the needed supplies to remove your drain at home. If any supplies need to be purchased, your healthcare team will review this with you before being discharged from the hospital.

If available, you may prefer to have a friend or family member assist with your drain removal. Please let your healthcare team know if you would like anyone else to attend your discharge teaching session for drain removal.

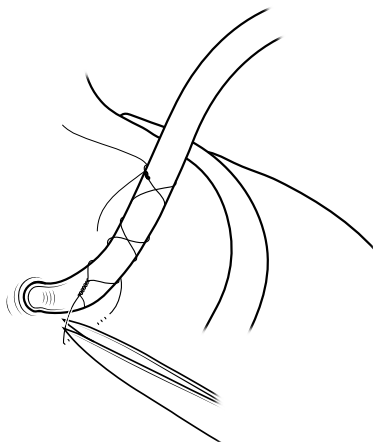
1. Gather supplies:

- Container to measure your drainage (use before removal)
- Medical gloves (clean)—optional
- Scissors and tweezers (a small kit with both items will be provided to you before discharge from the hospital)
- 2 Clean washcloths or small hand towels
- New tube of Vaseline or triple antibiotic cream (provided to you before discharge from hospital)
- Flexible, elastic bandage dressing (i.e. standard size band aid)
- Small trash can or bag to throw away your drain following its removal
- Mirror (if removing your own drain without anyone there to assist you)

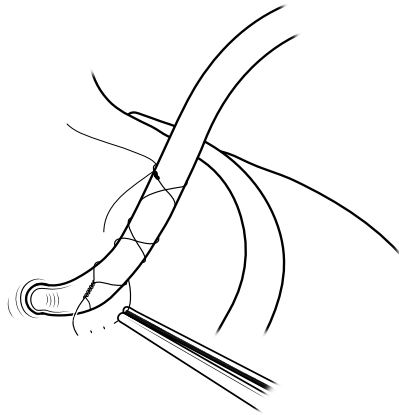
2. Wash your hands with soap and warm water. Rub your hands together on all sides, between your fingers and around your nails for at least 15 seconds.
3. Gently clean the area around the surgical drain with warm water using a clean washcloth. Next, pat the same area dry with a different clean washcloth or small clean dry towel.
4. Remove the cap on the drain to release the suction. Do not squeeze the drain while removing the cap. Next, put the cap back on the drain as it was before.



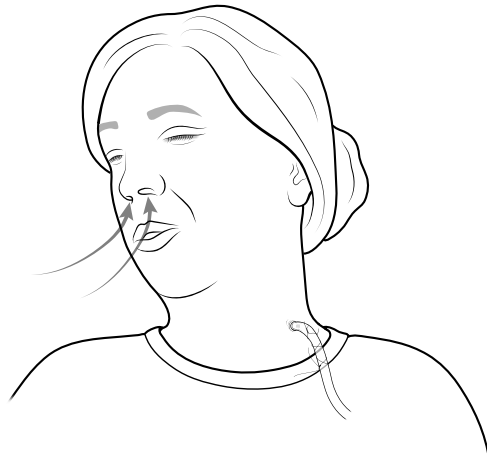
5. Wash your hands with soap and water after emptying the drain. You may also put on a pair of clean gloves if you prefer.
6. Find the black stitch that is holding your surgical drain in place.
7. Place the flat part of the scissors against your skin and slide it under the stitch on one side of the knot. The stitch may be very close to the skin and you may need to use the tweezers to pull slightly to give enough room for the scissors to slide under the stitch. This should not cause severe pain or bleeding. Gently, cut the stitch.



8. Pull the stitch out of the skin with tweezers, being sure to not leave any of the stitch in the skin.



9. Take a deep breath in and hold your breath.



10. Slowly release your breath while pulling the drain out. This may cause some discomfort but should not cause severe pain.



11. Once the drain is removed, it may be thrown away. Put the drain in a plastic bag and throw the drain away in your regular trash can.
12. Gently push on the skin in a circle around the area where your surgical drain used to be. See if any blood or fluid comes out of this area. You should not see a large amount of bright red blood or pus (thick, white fluid). It is normal to see small amounts of red, pink, or yellow fluid.
13. Wash your hands with soap and warm water as you did before.
14. Place a small amount of ointment (triple antibiotic ointment or Vaseline) on a small elastic bandage or band aid. To keep the container of ointment clean, do not let the ointment container directly touch your skin.
15. Cover the open area where the drain was just removed with the bandage with ointment.
16. Repeat washing your hands with soap and warm water.

What do I do after my drain is removed?

Every day, take off the bandage/band aid and replace it with a clean, dry bandage/band aid with ointment applied. Change the bandage/band aid more often if the bandage becomes wet or dirty. Continue to change your bandage/band aid in this way until your skin is healed and completely closed. To prevent infection, **do not** use any lotion on your drain site during this time.

It is normal to continue to have a small amount of clear, pink or yellow fluid come from the drain site after the drain is removed. If you notice any large amounts of bright red blood or signs of infection (any pus, fever or foul-smelling drainage from the drain site), call your healthcare provider.

You may take regular showers after your drain is removed. When you shower, let the water gently flow over the area where your drain was located. Continue to shower in this way until your skin is healed and completely closed.

Do not take a tub bath, swim, or get into a hot tub until your skin is healed and completely closed. It may take 1 to 2 days or up to 1 week for your skin to completely close and heal.

When to Call the Doctor

Call The James Head and Neck Surgery office at 614-293-8074 if you have:

- Fever of 100.4 degrees (38 degrees Celsius) or higher
- A large amount of bright-red blood, pus, or foul-smelling drainage coming from the open skin where your drain was removed
- Increased redness or swelling around your incision site
- Sudden increase in the amount of drainage
- Any new or increased pain
- Skin irritation, redness or blistering from your bandage
- If your drain does not come out (resistance) when pulling
- Feeling of pressure or fluid collecting under skin where your drain was removed
- Any questions or concerns about removing your surgical drain