

Department of surgery

Going home with a drain

If you are clinically well and have a surgical drain, you can still go home. This leaflet will provide the information you need to care for your drain. You will be taught how to look after it on the ward before you are discharged.

What is a drain?

A drain is a thin plastic tube that is inserted during your surgery. The tube is secured with a stitch. It sits outside of the body and is connected to, or covered by, a bag.

Why do I need a drain?

The drain removes any fluid that collects within the wound. This helps to reduce swelling, discomfort and bruising. How long the drain stays in place will depend on the type of surgery you have had and how much fluid it is draining.

Measuring the drain volume

In order to get an accurate reading, you must measure the amount at the same time every day. Open the plug at the bottom of the bag (as shown in the picture) and empty the contents of the bag into a measuring jug. Measure the amount and write it on the attached chart. Once measured, the fluid can be disposed of down the toilet.



Drain bag



Tap closed



Tap open

Changing the drainage bags

Your drain bag will need changing every 2-3 days. We will ask you to see your practice nurse or have a district nurse visit you to do this.



When will the drain be removed?

As the wound heals the amount of fluid in the drain will reduce. A specialist nurse will contact you regularly to monitor your drain output. This is why it is really important to write down the daily amounts. When the amount is low enough the drain can be removed. We will either arrange for a community nurse to remove the drain or ask you to come into clinic here at The Christie. The drain is removed by cutting the stitch and gently pulling the drain out. A simple dressing is then applied. Generally, having a drain removed is not painful; it is often described as just an 'odd' sensation, but nothing to worry about.

What to look out for

Infection

Symptoms of an infection include a temperature, redness, swelling, heat, pus or pain. If you think you have an infection, please seek medical attention from your GP or contact The Christie on one of the numbers below.

Swelling

If the drain is not draining properly then fluid can collect under the skin. If you notice increased swelling, then please call us on the numbers below.

Tissue growth

If the drain has been in place for a long time, tissue can grow around the entry site. If this is not causing any discomfort, it is nothing to worry about.

Increased amount of fluid

You may find that the drain output increases before it decreases. This is usually caused by movement. If you are concerned about a significant increase then please contact the ward or your specialist nurse.

What happens if your drain falls out?

If the drain tube looks out of place or falls out completely, do not panic. If the drain tube looks out of place but is still attached to you, please contact your district nurse or the ward for advice. If the drain tube has fallen out completely, please contact us on The Christie Hotline. The area may leak fluid or bleed slightly. Apply some pressure with clean gauze and put a dressing over the site. If possible, measure what is in the bag. The bag will then need to be disposed of in clinical waste.

Please make sure you have the following before you go home:

- Gauze
- Dressings
- 3-4 spare drain bags

If you have any questions or concerns please contact us

The numbers listed are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Ward 1	0161 446 2157/2159
Surgical oncology ward	0161 446 3860/3862
The Christie Hotline	0161 446 3658

Day	Date	Amount in mls
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact patient.information@christie.nhs.uk

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.

Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

