

Caring for Your JP Drains

For patients at the Center for Reconstructive Surgery

When you go home, you will have JP (Jackson-Pratt) drains in place. This handout explains how to care for your drains at home until they are ready to be removed.

Why do I have drains?

Your JP (Jackson-Pratt) drains are *closed bulb drains* move fluid away from your surgical site. This helps keep blood and body fluids from building up under your skin and causing swelling. It also helps your wound heal.

The drainage tubes go through your skin near your surgical incision. They are held in place by a stitch (*suture*).

While you have drains:

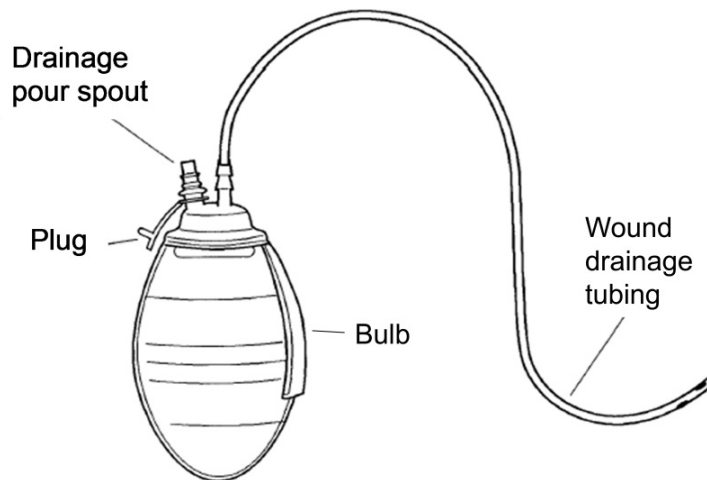
- Empty each bulb/collection container at least 2 times a day, in the morning and before you go to bed. Empty each bulb more often as needed, whenever it is $\frac{1}{3}$ full. (See “How to Empty Your Drains” on page 2.)
- It is normal for drainage color to change. It may be brown, dark red, red, orange, pink, yellow, and clear.
- Strip the drain tubing at least 2 times a day. (See “How to Strip Your Drains” on page 3.)
- Starting **48 hours after surgery**, shower every day. Allow soapy water to run over the drain sites. Do **not** scrub.
- When you are not in the shower, keep the area where your drains leave your body clean and dry.

To avoid infection, do **not**:

- Disconnect the bulb from the drain tubing.
- Poke holes, cut, or insert anything into the tubing or bulb.



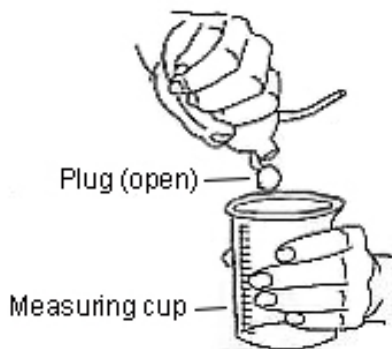
When you shower, let the soapy water run over the drain sites.



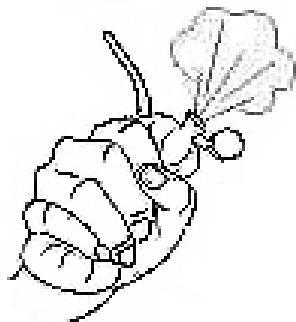
The parts of a closed bulb drain.

Recording Your Drainage

- You will receive a measuring cup when you leave the hospital. Use this to measure your drainage.
- Label your drains with numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 and keep track of the drainage from each one.



Turn the drain collection container upside down over the measuring cup. Gently squeeze the bulb to empty it.



*Squeeze the bulb flat with your hand **before** you replace the plug.*

How to Empty Your Drains

Empty each drain at least 2 times every day, or whenever it is $\frac{1}{3}$ full. To empty a drain:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water.
- Loosen the safety pins or clips that hold the tubing to your clothes.
- Strip the tubing (see “How to Strip Your Drain” on page 3).
- Clean the plug and spout with an alcohol wipe.
- Open the plug on the drain.
- Turn the drain collection container upside down over the measuring cup. Gently squeeze the bulb to empty it into the cup. (See the top drawing at left.)
- Clean the plug and spout again with an alcohol wipe.
- Squeeze the bulb flat with your hand. (See the bottom drawing at left.) Put the plug back into the spout.
- **Never** squeeze the bulb after you have put the cap back in place. Doing this can push the drainage back into your wound.
- Look on the side of the measuring cup to see how much fluid you drained. Write this amount, in milliliters (mL), on your drainage record sheets at the end of this handout.

- Check the drainage for color and smell. If it smells bad, call your clinic. If your clinic is closed, call 206.598.6190 and ask for the Plastic Surgeon on call to be paged.
- Empty the drainage into your toilet and flush.
- Pin or clip the drain bulb back onto your clothing.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water.

Bathing

- Do **not** take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or go swimming while you have drains.
- Please shower after you have had the drains in place for 48 hours.
 - If you have an outer surgical dressing, remove it before you shower.
 - To keep your drains in place in the shower, attach them to a lanyard or shoelace looped loosely around your neck.
 - To keep the drainage tubes from falling out in the shower, do not let the drains hang loosely. Hold the drains in one hand or place them somewhere near you where they will not fall.

How to Strip Your Drains

Stripping your drains will keep them from clogging. To strip your drains:

- With one hand, wrap an alcohol wipe around the tubing near your dressing.
- With your other hand, keep the tubing in place by holding it firmly between your dressing and the alcohol wipe.
- With your first hand, squeeze the section of the tubing covered by the alcohol wipe. Keep this pressure while sliding the wipe down the tubing to the bulb, and then let go.

When Your Drains Are Ready to Be Removed

Your drains will be ready to be removed when you empty less than 30 mL of drainage from them in two 24-hour periods, for 2 days in a row. When your drains are ready to be removed, you have 3 options:

- Call the clinic at **206.598.1217 and press 8**. Tell the nurse that your drains are ready to be removed and ask to schedule a nurse visit. Bring your drain records to your visit.
- Contact your primary care provider and ask if they are willing to remove the drains. Bring your drain records to your visit.
- If you feel OK removing the drains yourself, call the clinic for instructions. The nurse will ask about your drain records to make sure the drains are ready to remove.

When to Call the Clinic

Call the clinic at **206.598.1217** and **press 8** if:

- You have redness, swelling, or drainage at your incision or drain site.
- Your bulb/collection container refills with blood or drainage right after you empty it.
- You have more pain than usual, or your pain is not eased by your pain medicines.
- Your drain bulb will not stay compressed.
- Your drainage is cloudy or has a bad smell.
- The tube falls out.
- A suture comes out.
- You have a fever higher than 100.5°F (38.5°C).

After Clinic Hours

If you are concerned for any reason and the clinic is closed, please call **206.598.6190**. Ask for the Plastic Surgeon on call to be paged.

