Bulb Drain Home Care

A bulb drain is a small, plastic reservoir which creates a gentle suction. It is used to remove excess fluid from a surgical wound. The color and amount of fluid will vary. Immediately after surgery, the fluid is bright red. It may gradually change to a yellow color. When the amount decreases to about 1 or 2 tablespoons (15 to 30 cc) per 24 hours, your caregiver will usually remove it.

DAILY CARE

- Keep the bulb compressed at all times, except while emptying it. The compression creates suction.
- Keep sites where the tubes enter the skin dry and covered with a light bandage (*dressing*).
- Tape the tubes to your skin, 1 to 2 inches below the insertion sites, to keep from pulling on your stitches. Tubes are stitched in place and will not slip out.
- Pin the bulb to your shirt (not to your pants) with a safety pin.
- For the first few days after surgery, there usually is more fluid in the bulb. Empty the bulb whenever it becomes half full because the bulb does not create enough suction if it is too full. Include this amount in your 24 hour totals.
- When the amount of drainage decreases, empty the bulb at the same time every day. Write down the amounts and the 24 hour totals. Your caregiver will want to know them. This helps your caregiver know when the tubes can be removed.
- Once you are home, it is no longer necessary to strip the tubes as may have been done in the hospital. If there is drainage around the tube sites, change dressings and keep the area dry. If you see a clot in the tube, leave it alone. However, if the tube does not appear to be draining, let your caregiver know.

TO EMPTY THE BULB

- Open the stopper to release suction.
- Holding the stopper out of the way, pour drainage into the measuring cup that was sent home with you.
- Measure and write down the amount. If there are 2 bulbs, note the amount of drainage from bulb 1 or bulb 2 and keep the totals separate. Your caregiver will want to know which tube is draining more.
- Compress the bulb by folding it in half.
- Replace the stopper.
- Check the tape that holds the tube to your skin, and pin the bulb to your shirt.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The drainage develops a bad odor.
- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C).
- The amount of drainage from your wound suddenly increases or decreases.
- You accidentally pull out your drain.
- You have any other questions or concerns.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

If you have any questions or concerns, call the medical/surgical station.

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