

Discharge Instructions: Abscess Drain Care at Home

The Diagnostic Radiology (IR) team has inserted a tube to drain your abscess. The drain may be in place from several days to months, depending on your specific situation. The initial bandage may last several days to a week if you keep it dry. Proper care each day will allow the abscess to drain and help you heal.

While you have a drain

- Do not put the drain directly in water or let the bandage and insertion site get wet.
- Do not bathe in a tub or swim in a pool. The bandage and the site where the tube enters your body must remain clean and dry.
- You may shower, but **the insertion site must be kept dry**. Cover the site with plastic wrap and tape all around the edges to keep water from getting under the plastic. After showering, remove the plastic wrap. Check to make sure the bandage is still dry. If it is wet, change the bandage.
- Take care not to pull or tug on the drain tubing.

Daily drain care

Follow these instructions to care for your drain:

- Flush the drain once every day - or as otherwise instructed.
- Empty the drainage bag at least once every day - or more often if needed.
- Record the amount of drainage that you empty from the bag.
- Check the bandage and change it if it is very wet or soiled. A wet or soiled bandage can irritate the skin and increase the risk of infection at the drain site. You will receive the supplies you need to care for your drain before you go home. Extra bandage supplies may be bought at your local drug store.

To flush the drain

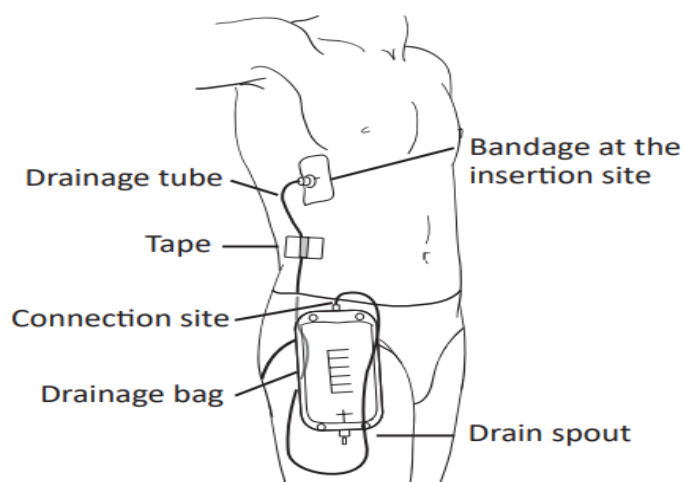
You might want to do this in the bathroom, in case of leakage. It is helpful if you flush the drain at the same time each day.

Prepare a clean area. Gather these supplies for each drain:

- 1 pre-filled syringe (10 milliliters [mL] of sterile normal saline)
- 1 alcohol wipe

Always wash your hands with soap and water before handling your drain.

Figure 1. Abscess drain system



1. Disconnect the drainage bag from the drainage tube at the connection site (see Figure 1 above). Lay the bag down on a clean surface.
2. Clean the end of the drainage tube with an alcohol wipe and attach the syringe.
3. Gently inject 5 to 10 mL. Make sure the drain is straight, not folded or kinked. Remove syringe
4. Connect the bag to the drain.
5. Wash your hands.

Note: Keep track of how much you inject. You will need to subtract this from the amount of drainage that is emptied before recording it.

To empty the drainage bag and record the output

You might want to do this in the bathroom. Gather your supplies.

- Daily Drain Record (see last page)
- Measuring cup

Wash your hands before handling the drain.

1. Place the measuring cup under the drain spout (Figure 1).
 2. Unscrew the drain spout.
 3. Let the contents drain into the measuring cup.
 4. Tighten the drain spout.
 5. Measure and record the amount of drainage in the Daily Drain Record.
 6. Pour the drainage in the toilet.
- If you have more than one drainage tube, each is labeled with either a number or letter.
 - Be sure to record each one separately in the correct column.
 - **Remember to subtract the daily flush amount from the drainage amount before recording it.**
 - Bring your Daily Drain Record to each physician visit. This information helps your physician evaluate your drain.

Changing your bandage and site care

Check your bandage at least once each day. It should be changed if it is:

- Very wet or soiled (slight dampness is okay)
- Falling off

If possible, have someone help you change your bandage at first.

Prepare a clean work surface for your supplies:

- Cotton balls or cotton swabs
- Normal saline or clean tap water
- 1 or 2 gauze pads (4 inches by 4 inches). You may also use gauze that is pre-split.
- Bandage tape

Wash your hands with soap and water.

1. Remove the bandage. If the bandage that is attached to the skin is very wet, be sure to remove it as well.
2. Clean your skin around the entry site with normal saline or tap water using a cotton ball or swab.
3. Remove all crust around the site, if present. You may need several cotton balls or swabs.
4. Wash your hands again to clean any drainage from your hands.
5. Prepare the tape. You may need to tear off 2 or 3 pieces to secure the gauze.
6. Place clean gauze under and over the drain to cover the insertion site. Secure the gauze with tape and cover the entire bandage with strips of tape. All the edges of the gauze should be sealed with tape or Tegaderm.
7. Allow a little slack in the tubing and add another piece of tape a few inches away from the bandage (see Figure 1 on page 2).

When to call

Call the Department of Diagnostic Radiology if...

- you meet with resistance when trying to flush the drain.
- all the flush comes out around the entry site while flushing. The bandage will become wet. (A small amount of leakage may occur and is normal.)
- the skin around the tube is red and irritated, has pus, or has a bad smell.
- you have nausea or vomiting.
- you have unusual pain around the tube or near the drain.
- you have a temperature more than **100.4 degrees F (38°C)**.
- your drain falls out.

Special Procedures Hours: Open between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Phone: **716-845-5992**.

After 5 pm, or on weekends or holidays: Call Roswell Park's main number, **716-845-2300** and our Call Center staff will assist you. If it is determined you need to be seen, we may ask you to come to our Assessment and Treatment Center (ATC), which is open 24/7. You must be referred to the ATC by your doctor (or the doctor on call); it is not a walk in clinic.

For an emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department.

Please note: If you go home with a drain and you do not have a follow-up appointment scheduled, please call the Department of Diagnostic Radiology as soon as possible to schedule a drain check for 1 week after discharge.

Appendix: Daily Drain Record

Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B	Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B
24-hour Total				24-hour Total			
Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B	Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B
24-hour Total				24-hour Total			
Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B	Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B
24-hour Total				24-hour Total			
	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B	Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B
24-hour Total				24-hour Total			
Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B	Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B
24-hour Total				24-hour Total			

Appendix: Daily Drain Record

Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B	Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B
24-hour Total				24-hour Total			
Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B	Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B
24-hour Total				24-hour Total			
Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B	Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B
24-hour Total				24-hour Total			
	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B	Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B
24-hour Total				24-hour Total			
Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B	Date	Time	Drain 1 or A	Drain 2 or B
24-hour Total				24-hour Total			