Early discharge with your drain following breast surgery

Issued by the Breast Team
This leaflet offers advice and information regarding going home with your drain following breast surgery.

It is common practice after breast, axillary and reconstruction surgery to have one or more drains in place.

**Benefits of a drain**

Going home with your drain will be discussed with you before your surgery by your breast surgeon and Breast Care Nurse Specialist to assess if this option is appropriate.

Going home with your drain is both safe and popular with patients as it gives the opportunity to recover from your operation in the comfort of your own home.

The drain encourages the healing process and prevents fluid collecting around your wound. The drains can remain in place for 1-10 days depending on the drainage.

**Risks of a drain**

The drain may be uncomfortable so take regular painkillers as prescribed.

If the drain is pulled it may cause you some temporary discomfort. To try and prevent this, the staff will secure the drain with appropriate dressings.
The Drainage System

The drain used is called a “Handyvac Low Vacuum Wound Drainage System”. The vacuum is to promote drainage from your wound and provide a sterile environment. This is a disposable closed unit. Small sutures (stitches) to your skin will secure the drain. The sutures will be removed at the same time as your drain and should not cause you any discomfort. It is a good idea to carry the drain in a small bag provided by the hospital, or to secure it to your clothing. This will prevent the drain from being pulled.

The drain will be emptied on a daily basis – please refer to “Going home with HandyVac” leaflet for further information on emptying the drain.

Who will monitor my drain at home?

Whilst you have the drain in place your Community Nurse will visit you daily to assess your wound and monitor the drainage. It is important that the amount drained from your wound is monitored and recorded daily so the team is aware of the total amount drained.

A chart is document the volume drained is provided in the “Going home with HandyVac” leaflet.

Once the drainage is 30 or 50mls or less over a 24 hour period the drain can be removed.
Removing the Drain

The small sutures (stitches) securing the drain will be taken out and then the drain will be removed. There may be some temporary discomfort as the drain is being removed. The drain can be taken out by the Community Nurse in your home. If you prefer, you can contact the ward where you had your operation and arrange a time to attend.

Disposal of the Drain

Discard the drain and tubing into a clinical waste bag (the hospital will provide this).

If the drain is removed at home do not discard the bottle/tubing with the household rubbish. The drain must be disposed of by the hospital. Please bring the clinical waste bag containing the drain to your next appointment.

General Advice

You will see the physiotherapist who will teach you a range of arm exercises and give you an exercise leaflet. It is very important that you follow the physiotherapist’s advice and practice the exercises at frequent intervals.
Contacts

If you become concerned at any time about your drain you should contact the Breast Care Nurses or ward where you had your surgery:-

Your Breast care nurses can be contacted Monday – Friday 8.30am - 5pm.

North Tyneside General Hospital
Clinical Nurse Specialists Breast Care
Telephone 0191 293 4183

Reconstruction Clinical Nurse Specialists
Telephone 0191 293 4347
0344 811 8111 ext 4687

Hexham General Hospital
Clinical Nurse Specialist Breast Care
Telephone 01434 655 386

Wansbeck General Hospital
Clinical Nurse Specialists Breast Care
Telephone 01670 529 319
01670 529 391
01670 529 636
The Surgical Help Line
Monday – Friday 8am - 4pm
Telephone 01670 529 431

If you need advice after 4pm, please ring 0344 811 8111 and ask for the ward where you had your surgery.

Out of hours or weekend – ask to be put through to the in-patient surgical ward at the hospital where you had your surgery.

Sources of information
Breast Cancer Care Helpline 0808 800 6000 or www.breastcancercare.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Relief Helpline 0845 601 6161 or www.macmillan.org.uk

Breast Care Campaign
www.breastcare.co.uk
Alternative Formats
If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices
www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)
www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Freephone: 0800 032 0202
Text: 01670 511098
Email: northoftynepsals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111
www.northumbria.nhs.uk

PIN 412/V3
Review date: July 2018
© This material is the copyright of the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust