



**Northumbria Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# 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 to 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](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk)

Macmillan Cancer Relief Helpline 0845 601 6161 or

[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

Breast Care Campaign

[www.breastcare.co.uk](http://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](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### **NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)**

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### **Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

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