

# Caring for Your Child's Drain After Surgery

At first caring for your child's surgical drain may seem like it's complicated and a lot to do. But each time you do it, it gets easier. You'll get the hang of it sooner than you think.

The surgical drain helps get rid of fluid that can collect inside your child's body after surgery. The drain lets the fluid out and helps prevent infections.

Now let's take a look at the parts of a surgical drain.

The drain has a tube that connects to a container. You can hook the container to your child's clothes with a safety pin... to keep it in place.

Okay, now let's go over how to... empty the container... clear the tube... and change the bandage.

To begin, wash your hands with soap and water... And then put on a pair of disposable gloves.

To empty the container, take out the plug. Some drains have a bulb that you can squeeze to get all the fluid out.

Empty the fluid into a measuring cup... and write down the amount... and the color.

Next, wipe the plug clean with alcohol. Then squeeze the air out of the container until it's flat, and then put the plug back in.

Empty the fluid from the cup into the toilet and wash the cup... and then wash your hands again. How often you empty the container depends on how much fluid there is. Doctors often recommend emptying it when it's about half full.

Sometimes the tube can get clogged. Here's how to clear it:

Use one hand to firmly hold the tube, close to your child's body. With your other hand, pinch the tube with your thumb and finger.

Slide your thumb and finger... while squeezing... slowly down the tube toward the container. Repeat this until the tube is clear.

If you have a bandage around the drain, follow any instructions you've been given for how often to change it.

When you change the bandage... gently clean the area with soap and water before putting on a new bandage.

As your child heals, make sure the drain fluid is getting lighter in color... and that there's less of it over time. The fluid will be bloody at first... and as the wound heals, it *should* change color... from red to pink... to light yellow or mostly clear.

Call your doctor if you see signs of infection, such as increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness... red streaks leading from the incision... pus draining from the incision... or a fever. And call your doctor if the fluid looks cloudy or smells bad... or if the drain comes out or stops working. You know your child best, so if something doesn't seem right, you can always call.

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Until it's time to have the drain removed, taking good care of your child's surgical drain helps with healing... and avoiding problems. If you're a little nervous right now, that's okay... Just think of all the ways you've always taken care of your child. You can do this too.