

CARING FOR YOUR CHEST DRAIN VALVE

What is a Chest Drain Valve?

A Chest Drain Valve (also called a Heimlich Valve) is a small device attached to the end of your chest tube. It lets air and small amounts of fluid drain from your chest until your lung heals. The one-way seal on the valve lets air escape the drain. **It is important that you do not block the valve.** You will need to empty the valve as needed and keep track of how much fluid is removed each time.

When is the Chest Drain Valve removed?

Your surgeon will decide when the Chest Drain Valve is ready to be removed, based on the amount of drainage and air coming out of the device. A chest X-ray, which can be done in the outpatient clinic, will help determine if you are ready to have the drain removed.

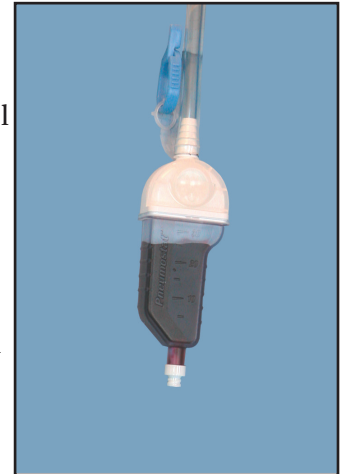
How do I empty the Chest Drain Valve?

It is extremely important to empty the fluid from the drain and always write down the amount that is removed. The drain needs to be emptied every 8 to 12 hours (2–3 times a day) or when the drain is 2/3 full. The drain may leak if it is not emptied often enough.

- **Supplies you'll need include:** Alcohol swab, luer-lock syringe, drain record (included in this handout).
- Wash your hands.
- Using one alcohol swab, vigorously scrub the port located on the bottom of the drain.
- Firmly screw the luer-lock syringe onto the port.
- Pull the plunger back on the syringe until all of the fluid is in the syringe.
- Unscrew the syringe and write down the amount of fluid removed (use your drain record sheet).
- Flush the fluid down the toilet and throw away the syringe.

How do I care for the Chest Drain Site?

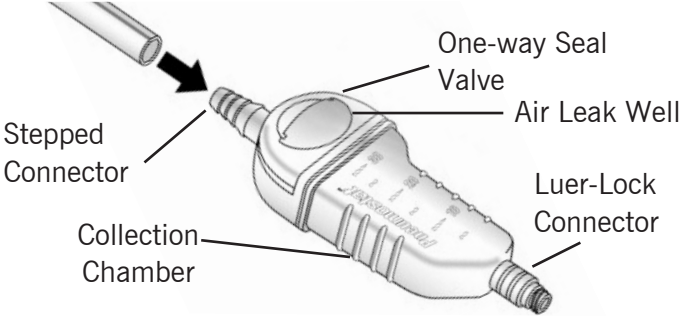
You cannot shower while you have the Chest Drain Valve. It is important to take a sponge bath every day. Change the bandages at the drain site at least once a day to keep the area clean and dry. Your healthcare provider will tell you if you need to do this more often.



- **Supplies you'll need include:** Drain gauze, top gauze, tape.
- Wash your hands, then loosen the old dressing.
- Check the area for any new redness, swelling, odor or pus where the drain enters your skin. Tell your surgeon if you notice any changes.
- **Every day**, put a new, clean drain gauze around the tube and a new top gauze over the site. Secure the gauze with tape.
- Use the clip to attach the drain to your clothes. This helps keep the drain upright and prevents leaking as much as possible.

Call your surgeon if:

- You notice any signs of infection at the site or in the drainage, including increased redness, tenderness, pus or bad odor.
- The drainage color changes to bright red blood or a cloudy liquid.
- The drainage stops completely.
- You have a temperature over 100.0 degrees F.
- The drain collector falls off the tubing. If this happens, immediately reconnect it and secure with tape, then call your surgeon. If you can't reconnect the drain collector and tubing, go to the closest emergency department.
- Your entire drain, including the tubing, comes out. If this happens, cover the area with gauze and go to the closest emergency department.



NOTES

This information is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or healthcare provider. Please consult your healthcare provider for advice about a specific medical condition.

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