

How soon will I be able to resume normal activities?

Once you have had your drain removed, you can try to do a little more physical activity each day. Try not to set yourself enormous tasks and remember to rest between them; your body needs time and energy to recover. You should be able to return to most of your normal activities within a few weeks of your operation but this will vary from person to person and it is helpful to take things gently at first try to avoid strenuous housework such as vacuuming, ironing or carrying heavy shopping for the first 1 or 2 weeks. You may have more discomfort and stiffness as you begin to move your arm more and become more active. This usually improves naturally over time. Eating well will also help your body recover and your wound to heal and a healthy balanced diet is recommended.

When will I be able to drive?

Depending in the type of surgery you have had you may be advised to avoid driving for between 1 and 4 weeks. It is important to wait for your wound to heal before you start driving and if you have a large amount of swelling allowing this to resolve first may make driving easier and more comfortable.

When can I return to work?

How soon you return to work will vary depending on your job and any follow on treatments you require as well as your progress recovering from your surgery. Most people will usually require at least 2 to 6 weeks off work and then will be able to reassess the situation as more information becomes available. If you feel you want to return to work earlier than this and are feeling fit and well then you can.

Excellent ★★★★★ ★ Trustpilot

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Advice for patients being discharged home with a drain following surgery to the breast and/or axilla (Breast Surgery / Abdominoplasty)

PATIENT INFORMATION

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Introduction

Following your surgery to the breast and/or under the arm (axilla), a wound drain may be inserted. A drain is used to prevent or minimise bruising or swelling caused by fluid collecting in the wound cavity. The drain(s) may be required to stay in for a period of between five to seven days, depending on the amount of fluid drained over a 24 hour period.

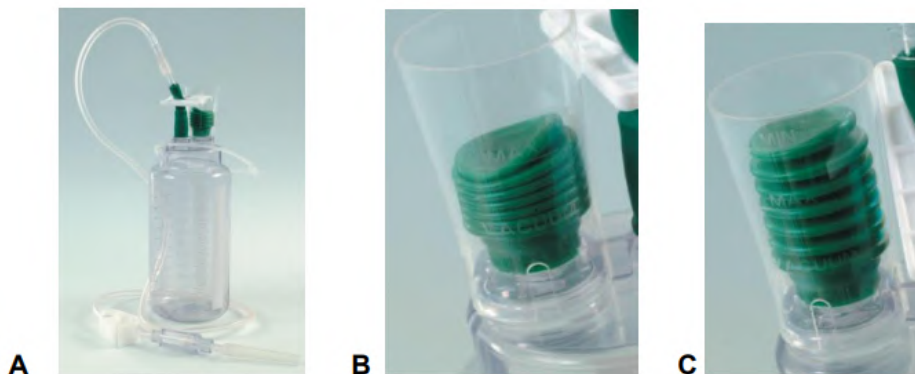
On day of discharge

You will be provided with a drain chart to monitor the output every 24 hrs.

To allow the nurse to access when it is best to remove the drain. This is usually when draining less than 30mls – 50mls in 24hrs.

How to check a drain is working?

Patients have drain (A) shown below. Drain (A) is a closed vacuum drainage system so the drain does not need to be in a specific position when you are carrying it with you. When the bottle is first attached and the vacuum is working the green concertina valve will be flat (B). As the drain bottle fills up this will expand. Once the bottle is full or if the vacuum has stopped working it will appear fully expanded (C).



There can be several reasons for loss of suction:

- The bottle may be full or blocked in tubing
- Accidental pulling of drain despite being stitched
- Tube may have become disconnected

If the drain bottle loses suction over-night and doesn't become disconnected you don't need to worry. It is safe to wait for the district nurse to change the bottle the following day.

Will I have to come back to hospital with the drain?

If there are no problems with your drain whilst it is in, the nurse will be able to remove it when it drains less than 50mls in 24 hours, from day two following your operation. If the drain, (s) is draining large amounts then it will be kept in till day five. If necessary, day six, but the drain (s) must be removed on day seven regardless of its amount. You will then be followed up in clinic approximately two-four weeks after your operation.

If there is a problem with your drain you may need to come back to the hospital to have it checked, removed or replaced.

- For example, if you develop a large amount of swelling whilst your drain is in.
- Or you are having a lot of leakage from the drain entry site and/or the vacuum does not appear to be working then you may need to return to hospital to be reviewed. The drain bottle may need to be replaced or the drain removed.
- If the drain bottle becomes disconnected.

Disposal of bottles

Used drain bottles must not be disposed of with general household waste. Your nurse will be able to advise on disposal of used bottles.

After the drain is removed

Once the drain has been removed the affected area should be more comfortable. Paracetamol may be taken if required to aid any discomfort.

The wound feels:

- Tender, swollen and warm to touch or has redness in the affected area.
- Leakage from the wound and/or drain site.
- Generally feeling unwell, with a raised temperature.

If you develop a large amount of swelling within 24 to-48 hours of the drain being removed and start to feel unwell it is important that you are reviewed.

