



How to Care for the Jackson-Pratt Drain

The Jackson-Pratt (JP) drain is a special tube that prevents body fluid from collecting near the site of your surgery. The drain pulls this fluid (by suction) into a bulb. The bulb can then be emptied and the fluid inside measured.

At first, this fluid is bloody. Then, as your wound heals, the fluid changes to light pink, light yellow, or clear. The drain will stay in place until less than 30 cc (about 2 tablespoons) of fluid can be collected in a 24-hour period.

Caring for the JP drain is easy. Depending on how much fluid drains from your surgical site, you will need to empty the bulb every 8 to 12 hours. The bulb should be emptied when it is half full. Before you are discharged from the hospital, your nurse will show you how to:

- empty the collection bulb
- record the amount of fluid collected
- put the bulb back in place so that the suction works again
- keep the drain site clean and free of infection

How to empty the drain

1. Wash your hands well with soap and water.
2. Pull the plug out of the bulb.
3. Pour the fluid inside the bulb into a measuring cup.
4. Clean the plug with alcohol. Then squeeze the bulb flat. While the bulb is flat, put the plug back into the bulb. The bulb should stay flat after it is plugged so that the vacuum suction can restart. If you can't squeeze the bulb flat and plug it at the same time, use a hard, flat surface (such as a table) to help you press the bulb flat while you replug it.
5. Measure how much fluid you collected. Write the amount of drainage, and the date and time you collected it, on the JP drainage chart at the end of this document.

6. Flush the fluid down the toilet.

7. Wash your hands.

How to care for the skin and drain site

1. Wash your hands well with soap and water.
2. Remove the dressing from around the drain. Use soap and water or 0.9 percent normal saline (on a gauze or cotton swab) to clean the drain site and the skin around it. Clean this area once a day.
3. When the drain site is clean and dry, put a new dressing around the drain. Put surgical tape on the dressing to hold it down against your skin.
4. Place the old dressing into the trash. If it is bloody, wrap it in a small plastic bag (like a sandwich bag).
5. Wash your hands.

How to check for infection

Watch the skin around the drain for these signs of infection:

- increased redness
- increased pain
- increased swelling

Other signs of infection are:

- fever greater than 101 °F
- cloudy yellow, tan, or foul-smelling drainage

Report any of these symptoms to your doctor as soon as possible.

If you have questions

If you have questions, please call your patient care unit at 301-____-_____

