

Going home with a Redivac drain

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What is a redivac drain?

A redivac drain consists of a length of tubing, which is inserted into the operation site during surgery and secured in place with a stitch. It is attached to a vacuumed collection bottle and gently draws fluid out of the wound.

A redivac drain is used to prevent blood and fluid collecting following your surgery. This encourages healing. The drain may stay in for several days; however, you will be able to go home with your drain in place.

How long does the drain stay in place?

The length of time the drain stays in place depends on the amount of fluid drained and the type of surgery. Your surgeon will always advise on how long they would like the drain to be in place for.

The usual advice:

- *Axilla/underarm drains*: <30ml in 24 hours or five days.
- *Breast reconstruction*: your clinician will advise on duration.
- *Haematomas (bleeding post-surgery)*: up to ten days (your clinician will advise on duration).

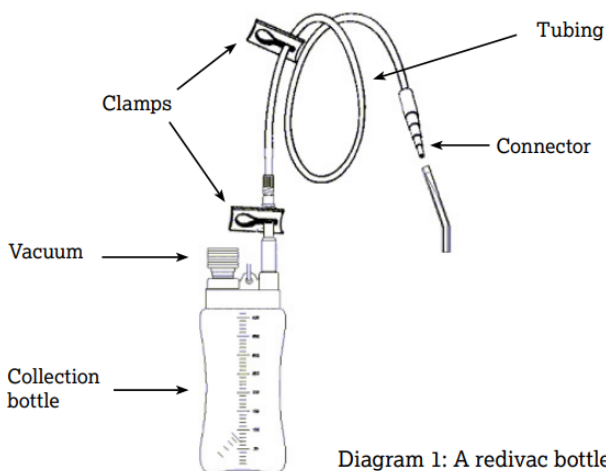


Diagram 1: A redivac bottle

Diagram 1:

<https://pharmchoices.com/redivac-drain-uses-how-to-change-the-drain-2/>

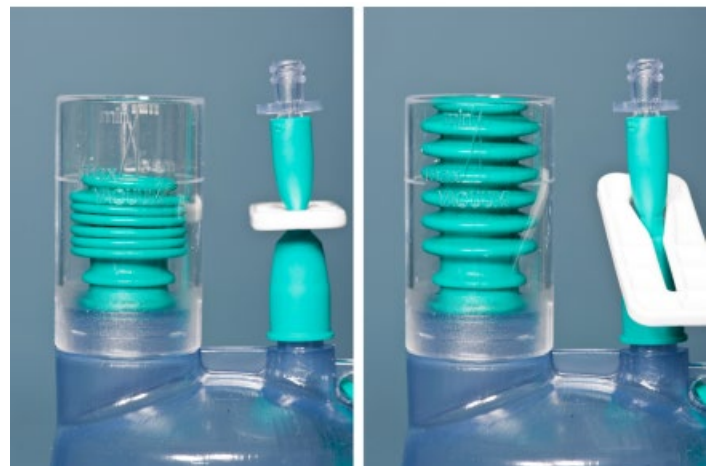


Diagram 2:

Left (**vacuum present**, green concertina is short and does not move).

Right (**vacuum lost**, green concertina is long and moves).

How do I measure the drainage in the bottle?

We encourage patients to mark the bottle and document the level of drain fluid collected each day. Please try to do this at the same time every day. Please see overleaf for a chart to document the amount of fluid.

What happens when the redivac drain is removed?

Your drain is usually removed at home by the district nursing team, however, sometimes we will advise you attend the hospital for one of the breast team to remove your drain (for breast reconstructions and haematomas).

Removing a drain is a simple procedure. Firstly we release the vacuum, then take out the stitch holding the drain in place and remove the tube. It is quite common for some fluid to leak from the wound following drain removal. A waterproof dressing is placed on the wound. If your wound continues to leak fluid and soaks the dressing, please replace with a new dressing. If this continues, please contact the Breast Care Nurses at the earliest convenience.

Seroma build up post drain removal

A collection of fluid (seroma) may develop under the wound after the drain has been removed. This is very common and please do not be concerned. Your body will absorb fluid naturally over a few weeks. However, if there is a larger amount of fluid, this is causing discomfort or feeling tight, you may need to have this drained. A member of the breast team can drain this using a cannula and syringe in clinic or sometimes using an ultrasound machine to assist them. This is usually painless and may need to be carried out several times.

If you notice any swelling, please contact the Breast Care Nurses (01493 452447) at the earliest convenience.

What do I do if I notice swelling over the weekend?

- Ensure you are wearing a supportive bra/corset
- Take regular pain relief
- Seek advice from A+E if you are worried

When do I need to seek help or advice from the hospital?

Please contact the Breast Care Nurses (in office hours) or attend the Emergency Department.

- Sudden swelling at the wound site that is causing you severe pain
- If the wound is leaking and not managed with pressure
- If the wound is red and you feel unwell (temperature, dizziness, nausea)

Common problem solving

- *Will I have to change my bottle?* The bottle may have to be changed if the drain loses its vacuum (Diagram 1) or if the bottle becomes full. You may be sent home with a replacement bottle. Please contact the Breast Care Nurses or District Nursing team if you have any concerns.
- *Can I have a shower?* You may shower but take care not to pull the tubing (place on a stool or chair beside the shower). Please do not soak the drain site in the bath.
- *What should I do if the tubing disconnects?* Sometimes the drainage systems disconnect, if this happens, please wash your hands and firmly push the tubing back in place. Check the drainage bottle still has a vacuum (Diagram 2), if the vacuum is lost please contact the Breast Care Nurses or District Nursing Team for advice.
- *What should I do if the drainage tube is accidentally pulled out?* Rarely the drainage tube may get caught and the drain may fall out. If this happens, wash your hands and apply pressure to the wound with sterile dry gauze to stop the fluid leaking. Please then contact the Breast Care Nurses as soon as possible. If the fluid does not stop with direct pressure for 15 minutes then please seek advice from the Emergency Department.

Fluid documentation chart

Day	Total amount drained (mls)	Time
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		

Contact Numbers

Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm:
Breast Care Nurses 01493 452447

Out of Hours:
Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays:
District Nursing Team 01493 809977

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Reviewed October 2025. Next review date January 2027 (RMH).

The Trust will record your personal information to support your healthcare, in accordance with the NHS Care Record Guarantee.

The James Paget University Hospital is a smoke free zone. Smoking is not allowed in the buildings, grounds or car parks.

Your Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible - talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/department staff are unable to resolve it, then ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care.

Before leaving please complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.

Help us transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

OUR VALUES

Collaboration We work positively with others to achieve shared aims

Accountability We act with professionalism and integrity, delivering what we commit to, embedding learning when things do not go to plan

Respect We are anti-discriminatory, treating people fairly and creating a sense of belonging and pride

Empowerment We speak out when things don't feel right, we are innovative and make changes to support continuous improvement

Support We are compassionate, listen attentively and are kind to ourselves and each other



IN TRAN
communication for all

The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

For a large print version of this leaflet, contact PALS 01493 453240