

## Surgical Drain Care

**OFFICE # 812.981.4724 (Always call this number). If calling prior to 8:00 AM or after 4:30 PM tell the answering service, you are a Dr. Palazzo BREAST patient. They will then connect you to the on-call nurse.**

Surgical drains are used to remove extra fluids that normally build up in a surgical wound after surgery. A surgical drain helps to heal a surgical wound. Different kinds of surgical drains include:

- Active Drains – These drains use suction to pull drainage away from the surgical wound. Drainage flows through a tube to a container outside of the body. With these drains, you need to keep the bulb or drainage container flat (compressed) at all times, except while you empty it. Flattening the bulb or container creates suction.
- Passive Drains – These drains allow fluid to drain naturally, by gravity. Drainage flows through a tube to a bandage (dressing) or a container outside of the body. Passive drains do not need to be emptied.

A drain is placed during surgery. Right after surgery, drainage is usually bright red and a little thicker than water. The drainage may gradually turn yellow or pink and become thinner. It is likely that your doctor will remove the drain when the drainage stops or when the amount decreases to 1-2 Tbsp (15-30 mL) during a 24-hour period.

### How To Empty Your Drain

1. Make sure you have a measuring cup that you can empty your drainage into.
2. Wash your hands with soap and water. If soap and water is not available use hand sanitizer.
3. Loosen and pins or clips that hold the tube in place.
4. If instructed by your health provider, strip the tube to remove clots or blockages.
  - Hold the tube at the skin with one hand. Use the other hand to pinch the tubing with your thumb and first finger.
  - Gently move your fingers down the tube while squeezing very lightly. This clears any drainage, clots or tissue from the tube.
  - You may need to do this several times each day to keep the tube clear. **DO NOT** pull on tube.
5. Open the bulb cap or drain plug. **DO NOT** touch the inside of the cap or the bottom of the plug.
6. Turn the device upside down and gently squeeze.
7. Empty all the drainage into the measuring cup.
8. Compress the bulb or container and replace the cap or plug. To compress the bulb or container, squeeze it firmly in the middle while you close the cap or plug the container.
9. Write down the amount of drainage that you have in each 24-hour period. If you have less than 2 Tbsp (30mL) of drainage in a 24-hour period, contact your health provider.
10. Flush the drainage down the toilet.
11. Wash your hands with soap and water.

