

*The* ROYAL MARSDEN

NHS Foundation Trust

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## Going home with a redivac drain

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**Sarcoma and melanoma unit**

**Patient Information**



**NHS**



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## What is a redivac drain?

A redivac drain consists of a length of tubing, which is put into the operation site during surgery and stitched into place with one stitch. It is attached to a collection bottle, which has a vacuum, and gently draws fluid out of the wound.

A redivac drain is used to prevent blood and fluid collecting following an operation. The surgeon puts in wound drains (tubes) with drainage (vacuum) bottles to remove excess fluid produced at an operation site following an operation. This aids healing. The drains may stay in for several weeks, however, you will not need to stay in hospital all this time. When your surgical team are satisfied with your progress you will be able to go home with your drain(s) in place. This information leaflet will help you to look after your drain when you go home after your surgery.

## How long does the drain stay in place?

The length of time the drain stays in place will depend on the amount of fluid drained. Before discharge you will be given instructions on when the drain can be removed.

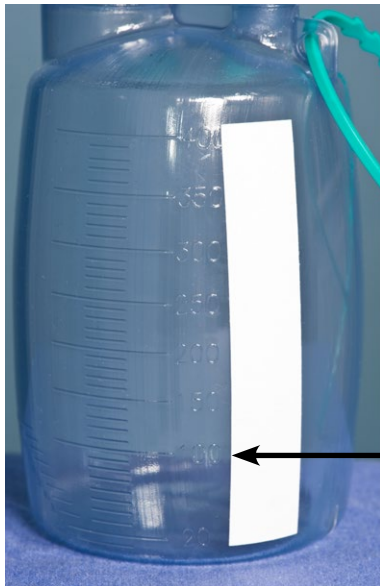
Before you go home, your ward nurse will explain how to care for your drain(s) and when it is to be removed. Otherwise, the drain will be reviewed at your post-operative follow up appointment two to three weeks after surgery.

## How do I measure the drainage in the bottle?

Mark the drainage bottle once a day to show the level of drained fluid collected. Try to do this at the same time every day (for example, after breakfast). This will help us to establish when it can be removed.

- Place the bottle on a hard, flat surface and draw a line (with pen) where the fluid level is on the side of the bottle. You can place a strip of tape alongside the markings to make this easier. See diagram 1 below.

- Each line equals 10 millilitres (mls) of fluid.
- Write the date and time (for example, 17.04.24, 50mls) next to the mark.



For example: 27.04.24,  
100mls

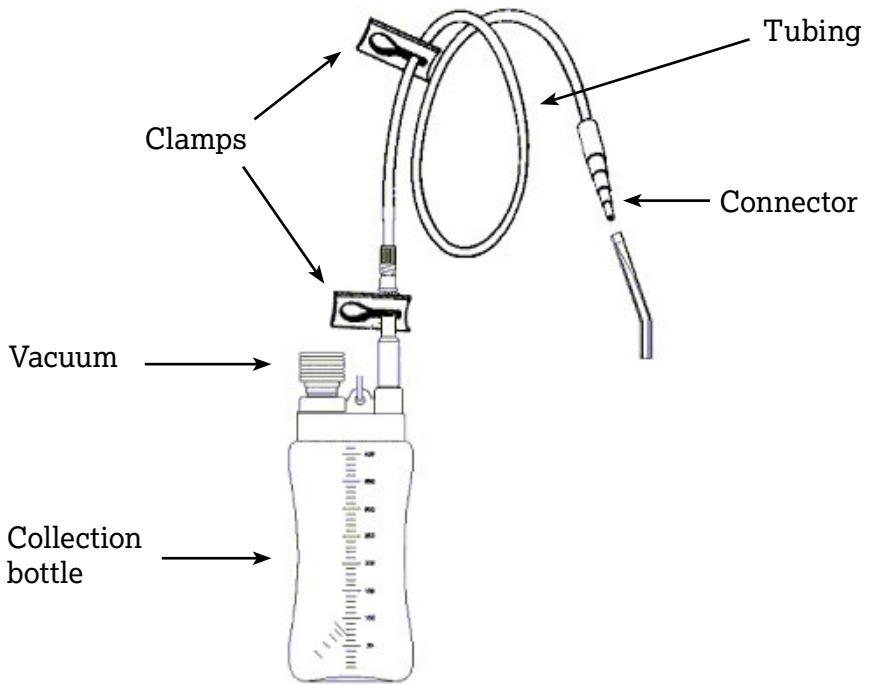
**Diagram 1:** Drain Markings – with a strip of white tape placed alongside the markings for you to mark the level of fluid

**24 hour drain record. Start date: .....**

Week beginning: .....							
	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Volume (mls)							

Week beginning: .....							
	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Volume (mls)							

Week beginning: .....							
	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Volume (mls)							



**Diagram 2: A redivac bottle**

## Will I have to change the drainage bottle?

Yes – it is very simple to do and we can teach you or a relative/friend to do this. You can also visit the below website which contains video instructions on caring for your Redivac drain. Scroll down to **drains**.

*[www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/welcome-patient-procedures-portal](http://www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/welcome-patient-procedures-portal)*

## How to change Redivac bottle

(This can be done by the patient, relative or friend):

1. Wash hands with soap and water, then apply alcohol based hand rub.
2. Prepare equipment on a convenient, clean surface.
3. Sit on a chair, or lie on a bed with the drain site exposed.
4. Seal off the bottle by closing both sliding clamps from the drainage tubing leading from the patient and the bottle connector.
5. Decontaminate hands with alcohol gel.
6. Place sterile towel from the dressing pack under drain tubing at connection point between the vacuum bottle and the drainage tubing.
7. Disconnect the bottle by unscrewing the luer lock and placing to one side.
8. Clean the end of the tubing with an alcohol wipe, wait a few seconds then securely screw the new sterile bottle into the connecting tube at the luer lock.
9. Unclamp both sliding clamps on the drain tubing.
10. Suction is established if the concertina bung remains compressed.
11. Measure the contents of the used bottle and document in your records.



12. Update your surgical team with drain output records as has been agreed.
13. Dispose of waste in a small bag and check with your local authority regarding arrangements for low level offensive hazardous waste removal.
14. Wash hands.
15. Place bottle below level of the wound.
16. Periodically check the vacuum and connection points.  
The concertina bung on the bottle should remain in the pressed down position for effective vacuum.
17. If this becomes decompressed the bottle will need changing and check connections.
18. If changing the bottle does not resolve the problem you will need to contact Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline or keyworker.

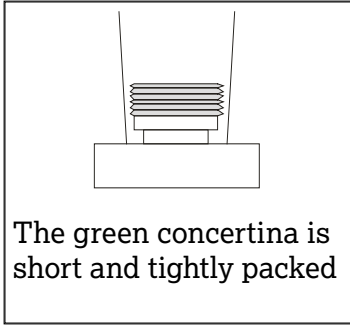
## **Problem solving**

### **What should I do if the tubing disconnects?**

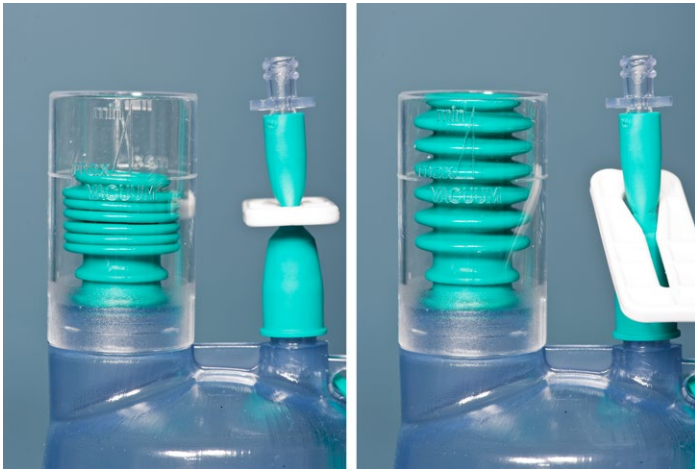
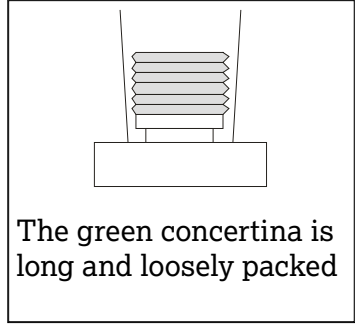
Sometimes the drainage system becomes disconnected at the connector site (see diagram 2). If this happens, wash your hands, wipe the end of each tube with an alcohol wipe and firmly push the tubing back in place.

Check that the drainage bottle still has its vacuum. You can check if the vacuum on the drainage bottle has been lost by looking at the green concertina part of the drain. If it is no longer tightly packed, the vacuum is lost (see diagram 3B). You may also hear a loud hissing noise as the vacuum is lost. If the vacuum has been lost, follow the steps below.

**Diagram 3A Vacuum present**



**Diagram 3B Vacuum lost**



Redivac bottles showing vacuum present (left photo) and vacuum lost (right photo)

**What should I do if the drainage tube is accidentally pulled out?**

Occasionally, the drainage tubing may get caught and the drain completely pulled out. If this happens, wash your hands and apply pressure to the wound with dry sterile gauze. Put on another dry dressing and contact The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline tel 020 8915 6899, or your keyworker for advice.

## How do I care for my wound and dressings?

- You will have extra dressings supplied by the ward when you go home. If the dressing that is covering the drain comes off, put on another one
- You can have a shower – but ensure that the dressing around the drain site does not get wet or change it after the shower if it does. Sit the bottle on a chair/ stool, beside the shower, to ensure that the tubing does not pull on your wound
- It is not advisable to have a bath
- The dressing should be able to stay in place for 3 days unless it becomes soiled then it will need changing, which can be done by you or the Practice Nurse or community nurses.

## What equipment will I take home with me?

- Dressing packs
- Spare dressings
- Alcohol wipes
- A large supply of redivac bottles; you will not be able to get them when you are back at home. Please bring any unused bottles back at your follow up appointment.

## Discharge advice

The amount of fluid in the drain can rise and fall when you are at home. The fluid may be straw coloured and have a red/pink tinge or streaks. **There may also be worm-like strands of tissue.** This is normal.

**Should the fluid become bright red with fresh blood, please contact The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline immediately on 020 8915 6899.**

On discharge you will be given instructions on when the drain will need to be removed. This may be done locally with your practice nurse, or community nurse, or on your return to clinic.

Please take your *In Patient Discharge Summary* with you if this is done by the Practice Nurse.

## **What happens when the redivac drain is removed?**

Removing the drain is a simple procedure that is usually painless. First we release the vacuum. The stitch holding the drain in place is taken out and then the tube is removed. Your wound dressing may be changed when the drain is removed.

## **Is there anything I need to look out for after my drain has been removed?**

A collection of fluid, called a seroma, may develop under the wound after the redivac drain(s) has been removed. This is very common. Your body will absorb a small amount of the fluid naturally over two to three weeks. However, if it is a large amount this will take longer. If this occurs and is causing a lot of discomfort, the fluid may need to be drained by one of the surgical team. If this occurs you should contact The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline or your keyworker for advice.

## **Helpful tips and things to remember**

- Remember to take the drain wherever you go
- Try to avoid the tubing catching on anything
- Always make sure the tube does not get kinked
- Wear loose clothing to allow for the tubing. Some people find it helpful to attach the bag containing the drainage bottle to a belt around their waist or carry it around in the small bag provided

- When sleeping, place the drain upright on the floor beside you. This will stop you rolling onto the drain bottle when asleep
- The bottle can get heavy which can sometimes be inconvenient and restricting. However, do not change the bottle unless it becomes full. This is because it can increase the risk of infection when the sterile seal is broken from the wound to the drainage bottle
- Check that the bottle vacuum is present by checking the green concertina at the top of the bottle (see diagram 3A).

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

You should contact The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline immediately if:

- Sudden swelling at the wound site that is causing severe pain
- Signs of infection such as the fever  $>38$ , redness, swelling to the drain site
- You have had to change the redivac drain more than twice in 24 hours due to increase in fluid amount
- Drain suddenly stops draining (rather than reducing to smaller amounts over a number of days)
- If the drain falls out
- Drain persistently loses vacuum.

## Contact details

If you or your carers have any queries or questions, you can contact:

**The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899**

You can ring the hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Call us straight away if you are feeling unwell or are worried about the side effects of cancer treatments.

This service provides specialist advice and support to all Royal Marsden patients, as well as to their carers, and both hospital and community-based doctors and nurses caring for Royal Marsden patients.

**Keyworker/Clinical Nurse Specialist Sarcoma 020 7811 8208**

**Keyworker/Clinical Nurse Specialist Melanoma 020 7811 8011**

## Further information

Web link to video on how to change your Redivac bottle:

*[www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/welcome-patient-procedures-portal/injections-drains](http://www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/welcome-patient-procedures-portal/injections-drains)*

## References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

Telephone: Chelsea 020 7811 8438 / 020 7808 2083

Sutton 020 8661 3759 / 3951

Email: [patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk](mailto:patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk)

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Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

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[royalmarsden.org](http://royalmarsden.org)

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