

Wound Care for Your Catheter/Drain Site For Breast Reconstruction Patients

You will need to care for the skin around your catheter/drain site **twice a day**. **Do not** take a shower until the drains are removed, unless you are specifically told to do so by your plastic surgeon. Your plastic surgeon will explain any specific precautions you need to follow if you are allowed to take a shower. **If you are not allowed to take a shower**, clean your catheter/drain site, with normal saline, **twice a day**.

It is important that this area remains clean and that you look for any signs of infection. This can be done at the same time as your suture line/incision care. The following information will help you care for your catheter/drain site at home.

Supplies You Will Need

- tape
- antibacterial ointment
- cotton swabs
- gauze pads, 2-inch by 2-inch
- normal saline (if you are not allowed to take a shower)

Procedure

- Gather all your supplies in a clean, dry area.
- Remove and throw away your soiled dressing.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- **If you are not allowed to take a shower**, use a cotton swab dipped in normal saline, to clean around the catheter/drain. Start where the tube enters your skin. Clean in a circular motion and move outward, away from the catheter/drain site. **Use a new swab with each cleaning. Do not** use the same cotton swab twice.
- When cleaning, lift the catheter/drain as needed to clean under it. Make sure that all drainage, dried blood, or crust is removed with each cleaning.
- The catheter/drain is secured to the skin with a stitch. Make sure the stitch remains attached to the skin. If it becomes loose, the tube may come out. Notify your doctor or clinic nurse if the stitch is not in place.
- Apply antibacterial ointment.
- Using two gauze pads, cover the catheter/drain tube site. Fold one pad in half. With the folded edge **up**, place it **under** the tube(s). Fold the other pad in half. With the folded edge **down**, place it **over** the tube(s).
- Tape the dressing in place. A dressing should remain over the tube insertion site at all times and should be replaced if it falls off or becomes dirty.
- Below the dressing, tape the catheter securely to the skin to prevent it from being dislodged.

- Wash your hands again when you have completed these steps.
- After the tube is removed, continue to clean the area with soap and water.
- Place a dressing over it until the site has healed completely.

Special Instructions

Notify your doctor or nurse if:

- Your temperature is higher than 101°F (38°C)
- Catheter site becomes red or swollen or has bad smelling drainage
- Drainage color becomes cloudy, milky, green or brown
- Stitch at the catheter site is not in place
- Drainage bulb no longer holds suction