

# Going home with a pigtail drain

## Information for patients and carers

You have been sent home with a pigtail drain. This leaflet explains how and why the fluid from your drain is measured and how you should care for your drain at home.

### What is a pigtail drain?

A pigtail drain is a thin tube that lets unwanted fluid out of your body. This fluid will need to be drained to reduce your risk of infection and of you becoming generally unwell.

The drain is held in place with a dressing. This dressing should be kept clean and dry at all times to help reduce the risk of infection to your wound site.

### How long will the drain be in place ?

This varies between patients and will be discussed with your consultant before you leave hospital.

Your drain will be removed by a community nurse or during a clinic appointment. You may have some fluid leaking from your drain site, this is nothing to be worried about and should dry up within a couple of days.

### Will I feel any pain?

You may feel some discomfort around your drain site; general painkillers such as paracetamol should help to control this.

### How do I look after my drain at home?

Before leaving the hospital your drain should be emptied by one of the nursing staff. They will explain to you how to open and close the tap on the drainage bag. Please speak to them if you have any questions or concerns.

When you are discharged home you will be referred to the community district nurses. They may not come out and visit you at home, but they will be able to help you if you have any concerns about your drain. Please ask your GP surgery to get in contact with the nurses, should you need their support or advice.



You may also be referred to the Surgical Emergency Assessment Unit (SEAU) at either the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital Margate or William Harvey Hospital Ashford. If you are given appointments to come into SEAU you will be seen by a doctor from your consulting team, who will check your drain and monitor your condition.

When you arrive for your appointment SEAU will contact your team to come and review you. If there is an emergency on the ward then there may be a delay in being seen.

### **How do I look after my wound dressing at home?**

It is important that you keep your dressing clean and dry. It should be kept on for around three to five days; your wound should be healed by then. After this you may remove the dressing.

You may bath or shower after your dressing has been removed using warm water. Try and avoid perfumed soaps on the affected area to minimise skin irritation.

### **Can I eat and drink as normal at home?**

Whilst at home you should follow the dietary advice that you were given by the ward, to prevent further flare-ups at home.

### **How do I keep a record of how much fluid is drained?**

It is important that when you are at home you keep a record of how much fluid is draining from your drain each day. This can be recorded any time of the day but should be started at the same time each day.

This should be noted on the drain chart on page 3 of this leaflet. When you come to the hospital for your appointment, please bring this record with you.

### **What complications should I look for?**

If you have any of the symptoms listed below, you must contact your GP straightaway. If they feel you should be seen by someone from the surgical team at the hospital, they may ask you to go to your nearest hospital.

- Fever (high temperature)
- Pain
- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Feeling generally unwell
- Nothing is draining.

### **Contact details**

If you have any questions about your drain, please contact us on one of the numbers listed below.

- SEAU, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital, Margate  
Telephone: 01843 23 51 43 (direct line)
- SEAU, William Harvey Hospital, Ashford  
Telephone: 01233 63 33 31 extension 723-4284



Please give details of any signs of the drain leaking; please include date, time, and what you were doing when this happened.

We hope you have found this leaflet helpful. If you have any feedback about the leaflet or the service, please note your comments below and bring them into SEAU when you arrive for your appointment.

**This leaflet has been produced with and for patients**

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments** please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email [ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital.** Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

**Further patient leaflets** are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site [www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation](http://www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation)