

The Jackson-Pratt (JP) drain is a special tube that prevents body fluid from collecting near the site of your surgery. The drain pulls this fluid (by suction) into a bulb. The bulb can then be emptied and the fluid inside measured.

At first, this fluid is bloody. Then, as your wound heals, the fluid changes to light pink, light yellow, or clear. The drain will stay in place until less than 30 cc (about 2 tablespoons) of fluid can be collected in a 24-hour period.

Caring for the JP drain is easy. Depending on how much fluid drains from your surgical site, you will need to empty the bulb every 8 to 12 hours. The bulb should be emptied when it is half full. Before you are discharged, your nurse will show you how to:

- empty the collection bulb
- record the amount of fluid collected
- squeeze the bulb flat and plug so that the suction works again keep the drain site clean and free of infection

How to empty the drain

1. Wash your hands well with soap and water.
2. Pull the plug out of the bulb. (Not the tube/hose – leave that alone)
3. Measure the fluid.
4. Clean the plug with alcohol. Then squeeze the bulb flat. While the bulb is flat, put the plug back into the bulb. The bulb should stay flat after it is plugged so that the vacuum suction can restart,
5. Measure how much fluid you collected. Write the amount of drainage, and the date and time you collected it, on the JP drainage chart at the end of this document.
6. Flush the fluid down the toilet.
7. Wash your hands.

Complications

Sometimes, a large amount of fluid may leak from around the drain site, making the gauze dressing completely wet. If this happens, use soap and water to clean the area. Verify that the bulb drain is secured and “flat” to provide the needed suction.

Another potential side effect is the development of a clot within the drain. This appears as a dark, stringy lining. It could prevent the drainage from flowing through the tube. You can milk the tube of the drain as you have been shown to do previously.

Be sure to notify your doctor if either of these complications occurs.

How to check for infection

Watch the skin around the drain for these signs of infection: · increased redness · increased pain · increased swelling

Other signs of infection: · fever greater than 101 °F · cloudy yellow, tan, or foul-smelling drainage

Report any of these symptoms to your doctor as soon as possible.