Your doctor used a drain in your surgical wound to help promote healing and to reduce the chance of infection at your wound site. The drain lets fluid out of the wound area.

A dressing is used around the drain to absorb the drainage and to keep the site clean and dry. It also protects the drain and wound site.

Your drain may come out of your wound site or the drain may have its own exit site away from your surgical wound.

**Penrose Drain**

One type of drain is called a Penrose drain. This drain looks like a flat rubbery ribbon that will stick out of your wound a few inches. It drains fluid from the surgical wound site. There may be a safety pin in the end of it so that it will not be able to slip back into your wound. The dressing around the end of the Penrose drain absorbs the fluid and may need to be changed more often.

**Jackson-Pratt Bulb Drain**

Another drain that may be used is a bulb suction drain. One type is called a Jackson-Pratt drain. This drain has a bulb that attaches to the end of the tube. The fluid from the wound comes through the tube and collects in the bulb.

The bulb needs to be opened and emptied every few hours or as directed. Your dressing may only need to be changed daily with this type of drain.

Use a small medicine or measuring cup to measure the amount you drain. Keep a record of the amounts of fluid that collect from your drain. Once you empty the bulb, squeeze it to remove the air from the bulb and replace the cap. This causes a suction to be formed in the drain to pull more fluid out.
Changing the Dressing
The dressing care is the same for either drain. Change your dressing at least once a day, or as directed by your doctor. If the dressing gets wet or comes loose, change it right away.

When you change the dressing, it is a good time to check how your wound is healing. Look at the skin at the wound site to check for any signs of infection or changes. If you notice any of these signs, call your doctor or home care nurse right away:

- swelling
- redness
- foul odor
- yellow or green drainage
- a large increase in the amount of drainage
- the drainage changes from clear to bloody

Gather Your Supplies
- antibacterial soap and water
- wash cloth and small towel
- _____ gauze 4 x 4 dressings or _____ split gauze 4 x 4 dressings
- cotton tipped swab
- paper tape
- small plastic bag for waste
- non-sterile gloves

Dressing Change Steps
Gloves do not need to be worn if you are changing your own dressing. If a family member or other support person is changing your dressing, he or she should wear non-sterile gloves. This protects the person from your body fluids.

1. Wash your hands with antibacterial soap and warm water. Put gloves on, if needed.
2. Remove old dressing by peeling each piece of tape loose. Take the old gauze dressings off one layer at a time. Be careful not to pull on the drain tube. Note the amount and color of drainage on the dressing. Throw the old dressing in the plastic bag. Remove soiled gloves, and throw them in the plastic bag.
3. Look at the wound site for signs of infection:
   - swelling
   - redness
   - yellow or green drainage
   - foul odor
4. Wash your hands again with soap and warm water.
5. Cut pieces of paper tape and have them within reach. Put on a new pair of gloves, if using gloves.
6. Cleanse the wound with soap and water, gently wiping from the top of the wound to the bottom in one motion. Using another washcloth, repeat on the other side of the incision. Be sure to cleanse around the drain tubing carefully so it is not pulled. Pat the incision line dry with towel.
7. Open the gauze dressing package. Pick up the new gauze dressing carefully. Pick up the new gauze dressing carefully so you do not touch the side that will go on the wound.
8. Apply new gauze dressing to drain site. If using split 4 x 4 dressing, place one around the drain tube. Place a second split dressing around the drain from the other direction so that the dressings overlap and surround the drain. Apply plain 4 x 4 dressings over the drain site. Tape the dressing in place, by lapping each piece over to make a tight seal over the gauze.

9. If you are using plain gauze 4 x 4 dressings, place one or more under the drain. Then put another 4 x 4 on the top of the drain exit site. Tape the dressing to create a tight seal.

Note: If you are having a large amount of drainage from a Penrose drain, you may want to add more layers of gauze around or over the drain to collect the drainage.

10. Put all the waste paper and used supplies including gloves, in the plastic bag and tie it shut. Throw it away in your garbage can.

11. Wash your hands again with soap and warm water.

- Keep a dressing on your wound for _______ days or as long as you have any drainage on the dressing.
- Call your doctor if you have any questions or concerns.
Drain Record

Please measure and record drainage each time you empty the drain.

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