

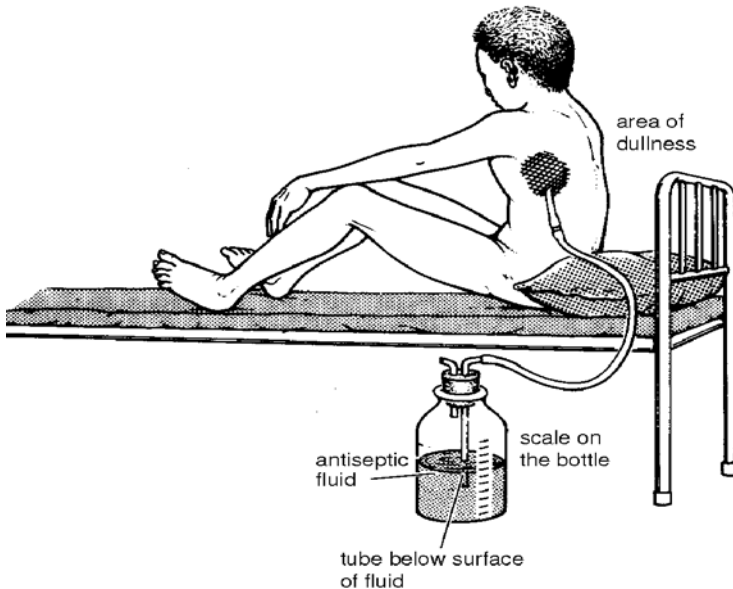
The Children's Hospital
Chest Drains

Information for parents



What is a chest drain?

A chest drain is a narrow tube which is inserted into the space between the lung and the chest wall. This space is lined by a membrane called the pleura and is known as the pleural space.



Why does your child need a chest drain?

If your child has had an operation called a thoracotomy they may require a chest drain to be inserted. This allows any fluid and air to drain out of the pleural space.

How is a chest drain inserted?

A chest drain will usually be inserted at the time of your child's operation while they are under general anaesthetic. One end of the tube is inserted into the pleural space to allow fluid and air to drain out. The other end is attached to a bottle containing sterile fluid, which stops air leaking back into the pleural space. It is important that the end of the tube remains below the water

level in the bottle. The bottle must be kept below waist height to prevent any drainage back up the tube. The drain will remain in after the operation and will be removed after several days.

How is a chest drain managed?

After the chest drain is inserted your child is still able to move and walk around but their drainage bottle must be carried with them and kept below the level of their waist. Fluid from the bottle may flow back into the pleural space if the bottle is lifted above the waist.

What are the risks?

There is a risk of:

- The drain falling out
- The drain getting blocked before all the air or fluid is removed from the chest cavity
- Infection
- Air tracking into the fatty tissue under the skin (surgical emphysema).

Removing the drain

Your child will need to stay in the hospital for several days after their operation. The nurses and doctors will monitor them and make sure they are comfortable. Their drain can usually be removed after a few days. Before the drain is removed the tube is clamped for several hours and then a chest X-ray is taken. Once the doctors are satisfied that the all the fluid and air has drained from the pleural space the drain is removed on the ward under pain control. If you have questions at any time please ask the doctors or nurses.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns when you get home from hospital, please get in touch with us or speak to your GP. We will write to your GP to tell them about your child's operation.

Tom's Ward: Tel (01865) 234108/9

John Radcliffe switchboard: Tel (01865) 741166

Children's Day Care Ward: Tel (01865) 234148

Follow-up

You may need a follow-up appointment several weeks or months after you child has been discharged from the hospital. Your nurse will tell you about this.

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473**. When we receive your call we may transfer you to an interpreter. This can take some time, so please be patient.

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