

Thoracic Surgery

# Going home with a chest drain

Information for patients



Oxford Heart and Lung Centre

You have been discharged from hospital with a chest tube and an Ambulatory Chest Drain. This drains away any air or fluid that is in the pleural space of your lungs following your procedure. The pleural space is usually a very small gap between the lung and the inside of the ribcage.

This information booklet has been given to you to help answer some of the questions that you may have about how to manage at home with a chest drain.

## How do I look after my chest drain?

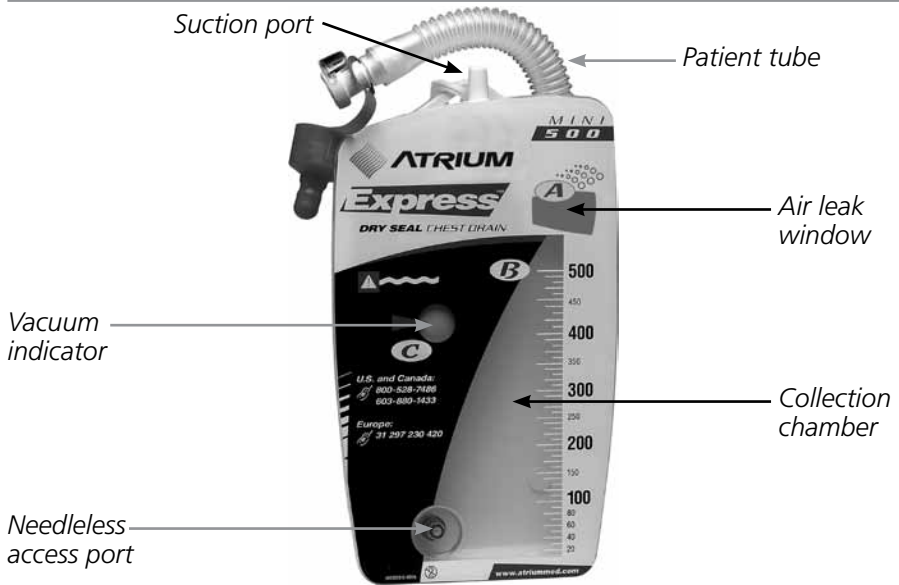
We will explain how the portable drain system works before you go home. Please ask any questions if you are uncertain.

The portable drain system comes with a strap, so you can wear it over your shoulder or as a belt. If you will need to empty the drain your nurse will show you how to do this.

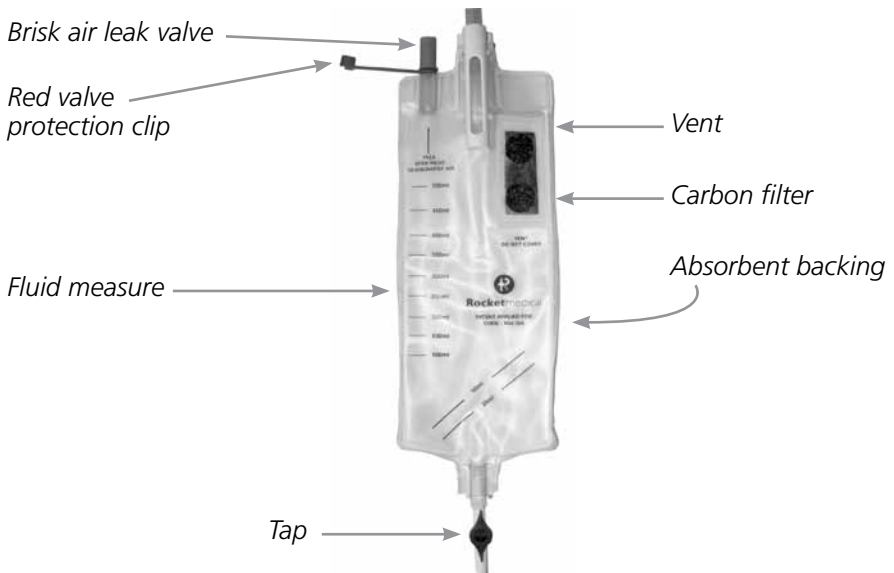
If you empty your drain at home, please write down how much fluid was in the drain – we will want to know this when you come for your appointment. The drain is marked to help you keep a record. There is a table at the end of this booklet for you to record the amount of fluid you have emptied from the drain.

Do not kink or obstruct the chest drain tubing.

# Atrium Mini 500 Ambulatory Chest Drain



# Rocket Ambulatory Chest Drain Bag



## Looking after your wound

The drain is attached to your skin with a simple stitch. This is covered by a dry dressing. A district nurse will visit you to change this dressing. This will be changed twice a week.

Your district nurse can call us on the number at the end of the booklet if he/she has any concerns or questions about your chest drain.

## After leaving hospital

You can slowly get back to your normal activities, gradually doing more every day. At home you will find it easier to exercise. Try and go for short walks, for example, in the garden or to the local shop.

If you usually drive a vehicle, you should avoid doing so while taking strong prescribed painkillers such as morphine liquid (Oramorph™), codeine or tramadol as these can affect your concentration.

We hope your appetite will improve as it is important to gain energy from food. If your appetite does not improve please speak to your GP for advice about supplements. Drink plenty of fluids such as water and fruit juice to help prevent constipation.

## Will I be in pain?

A chest drain can sometimes be sore or uncomfortable. You will go home on some painkillers and we will tell you how to take them. We expect that you will continue to need the painkillers while the drain is still in place.

## Will I need to do any specific exercises?

Walking is the best exercise. Set yourself short targets which you can gradually improve on. Walking up and down stairs at home is also good for you but be careful not to tire yourself out. If you have difficulty walking or are unable to walk the physiotherapist will advise you on alternative forms of exercise.

Practice deep breathing exercises four times a day, or more if you can manage it:

- Breathe in slowly and then count to ten (this expands your lungs).
- Release the breath slowly as you count to ten.
- Do this five times in a row.

## What should I do if I have a problem at home?

Contact the Advanced Nurse Practitioner for Thoracic Surgery or the cardiothoracic ward if you have any of the following:

- difficulty in breathing
- if your drain becomes detached
- the pain at your chest drain site feels different or is getting worse
- you feel hot and/or sweaty
- you have a high temperature.

**In an emergency you should always call 999**

## Contacts

If you have any question or concerns please contact one of the numbers below:

### **Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Thoracic Surgery**

(Monday to Friday 7.45am to 4pm)

01865 572 653

01865 741 166 and ask for bleep 1184 if urgent

### **Cardiothoracic Ward**

(Anytime)

01865 572 662

Co-ordinator

01865 741 166 and ask for bleep 1971

### **Matron**

01865 572 649

01865 741 166 and ask for bleep 1185 if urgent

## Drainage record chart

<b>Date</b>	<b>Amount of fluid emptied from bag</b>

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

Jenny Mitchell, Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Thoracic Surgery  
March 2014  
Review March 2017  
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust  
Oxford OX3 9DU  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk/patientinformation](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/patientinformation)