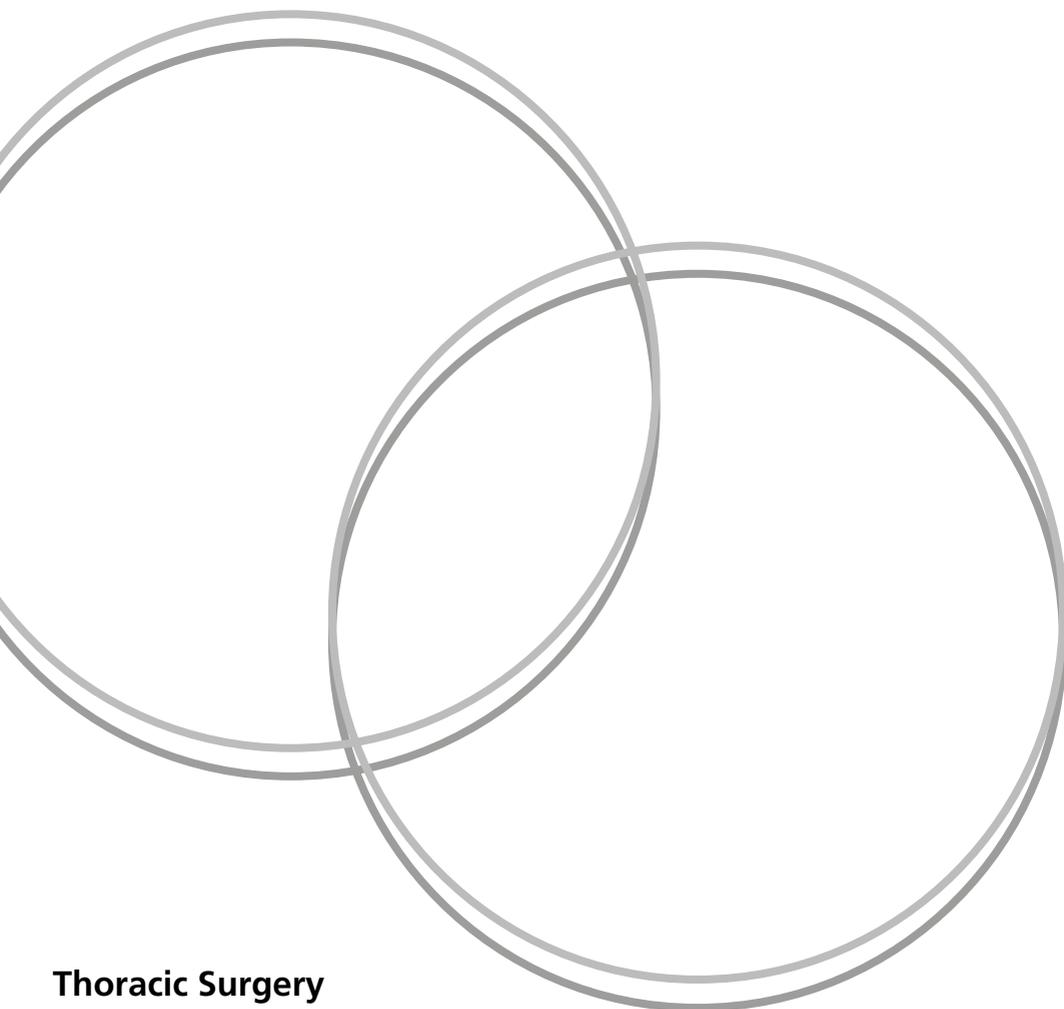




Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Going home with a chest drain

**Information for patients**



**Thoracic Surgery**

You are being discharged from hospital with a chest tube and an Ambulatory Chest Drain. This drains away any air or fluid that may collect around your lung following your procedure.

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.

We allow you to go home with a chest drain once you are stable after your surgery, your pain is controlled and you are happy you can cope at home with the drain. It is a requirement that you have someone staying with you overnight while the chest drain is in place, in case of emergencies. If you cannot arrange for someone to stay with you overnight please let your nurse and doctor know immediately.

## **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.

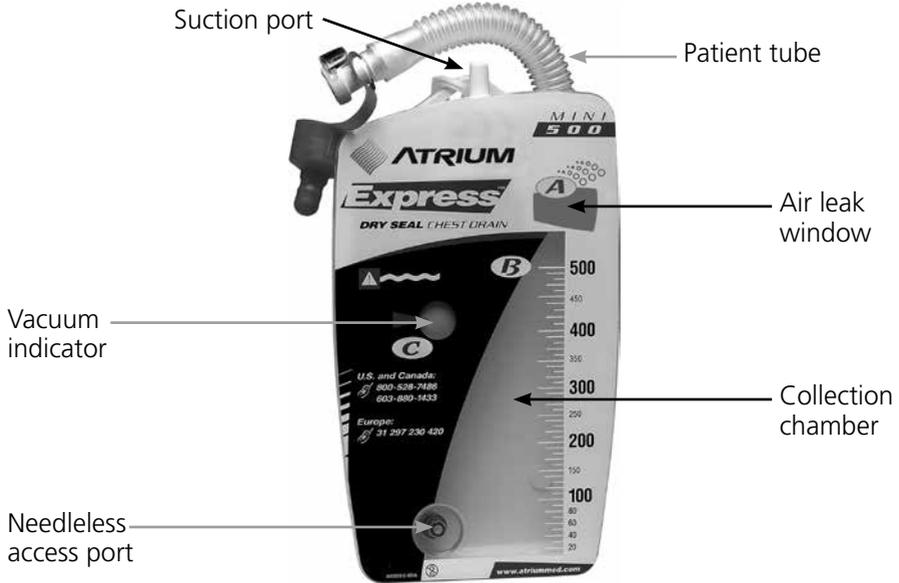
Do not kink or obstruct the chest drain tubing.

Do not disconnect any part of the drain system for any reason. If the drain accidentally becomes disconnected please reconnect it immediately then call us for further advice. If you have any problems reconnecting the drain you should call 999 for immediate help.

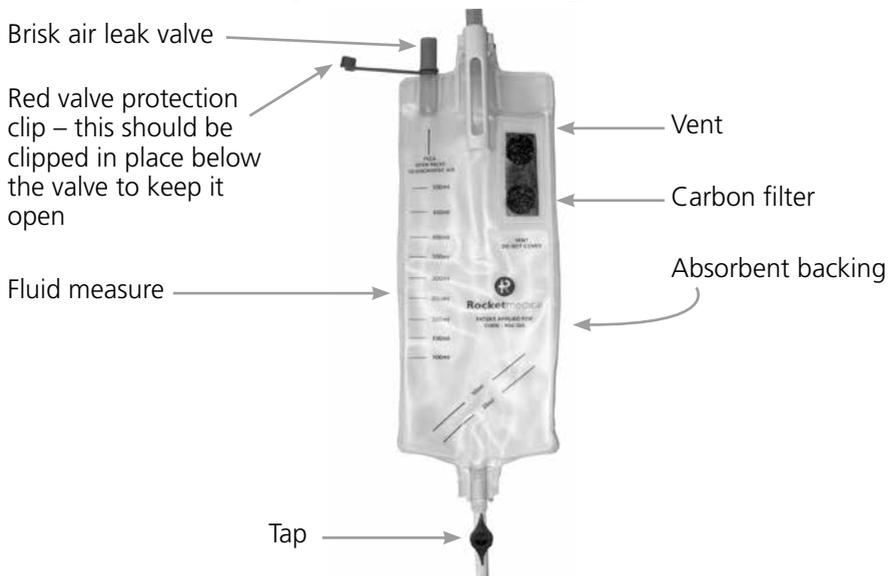
You can have a shower with the drain in place, it is important you do not leave wet dressings around the drain site so we advise having your shower just before going for your dressing change. You should pat the drain dry after your shower. Do not put the drain in a bag to keep it dry as this could stop the air escaping and collapse your lung.

# What do the ambulatory drains look like?

## 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. The dressing needs to be changed regularly, your ward nurse will arrange an appointment with the practice nurse in your GP surgery before you are discharged home. The dressing will also be checked and changed when you come to your hospital appointment

Your community 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 around your local area.

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 please reattach it immediately then call us.
- 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**

## **When will I be reviewed?**

You will be seen in the Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP) clinic every week until your drain is removed. The clinic is based in the Heart Centre Out-Patients Department at The John Radcliffe Hospital. Before you are discharged you will be given the date and time of your first appointment.

When you come to your appointment you will have a chest X-ray to check your lung expansion, your condition and the output from the drain will be checked by the ANP. If the drain can be removed this will be done in the clinic. Medication is not available in the clinic so please make sure you have taken your regular painkillers before your appointment as the sensation of the drain coming out can be unpleasant. If the drain needs to stay for longer your dressing will be changed and you will be given an appointment for the ANP clinic the following week.

## Contacts

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

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

Tel: **01865 572 653**

Tel: **01865 741 166** and ask for bleep 1184 if urgent

### **Macmillan Advanced Nurse and Therapist Practitioners**

Tel: **01865 223 874**

Tel: **01865 741 166** and ask for bleep 8113 (if urgent)

### **Cardiothoracic Ward**

(Anytime)

Tel: **01865 572 662**

Co-ordinator

Tel: **01865 741 166** and ask for bleep 1971



# **Your appointment in the ANP Clinic:**

## **Oxford Heart Centre Out-Patients Department**

Level 2, John Radcliffe Hospital

Date: .....

Time: .....



## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: Jenny Mitchell, Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Thoracic Surgery  
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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
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