

Going Home with a Drain After Head and Neck Surgery

What is a drain and why do I need it?

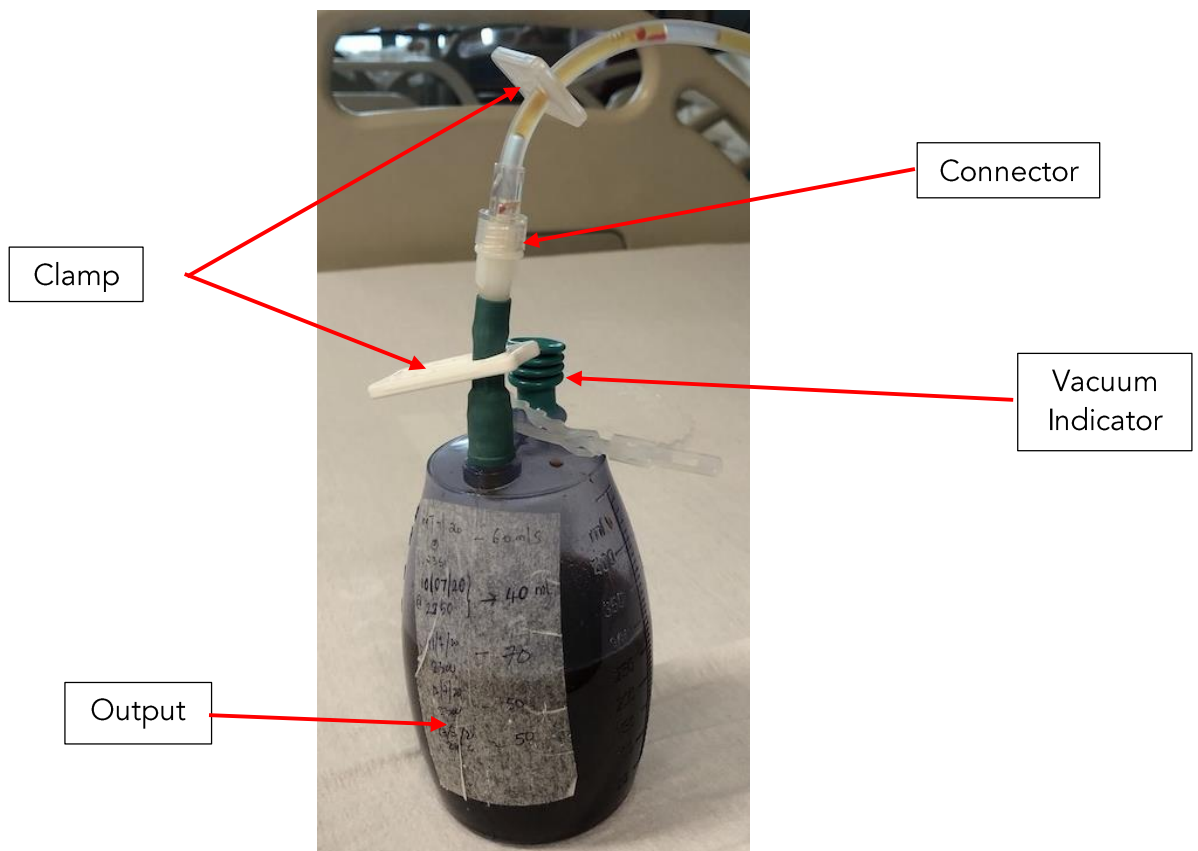
- A drain is a tube that removes fluid from the surgical site. It helps the surgical wound heal faster by reducing the risk of swelling.
- Drains can be kept for up to five days until the amount of fluid drained out becomes minimal.

Why am I encouraged to go home with a drain?

- After 1 to 2 days of post-operative observation, patients are often well enough to walk, eat and care for themselves independently.
- The subsequent days in the hospital might be spent waiting for the drain to be removed.
- Drain care is uncomplicated and manageable, and allows you to be discharged earlier, return home and spend meaningful time with your family.

How do I care for my drain?

1. Refer to the diagram below for the parts of the drain:



Picture courtesy of Dr Li Hao

2. Refer to the pictures below on how to position and carry your drain:



a. Taping the drain to the neck



b. Carrying the drain with you

Pictures courtesy of Dr Li Hao

What are some problems that might happen with my drain, and how do I fix them?

1. Loss of Suction:

- A vacuum has been created in the drain to remove fluid from your surgical site.
- This vacuum should not be lost unless your surgeon specifically wants it to be so.
- If the vacuum indicator expands (see picture below), it means that vacuum in the drain bottle might be lost.
- If this happens, visit Clinic 1B at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (Monday to Friday, 9.00am— 5.00pm) OR Tan Tock Seng Hospital Emergency Department (after office hours or on weekends). Our doctors or nurses will attend to you.



Picture courtesy of Dr Li Hao

Suction indicator
expands when the

2. Drain is Clamped:

- The drain must be unclamped to allow drainage of wound fluid.
- If you see your drain is clamped, please unclamp it (see picture below).



Wrong: Drain is Clamped

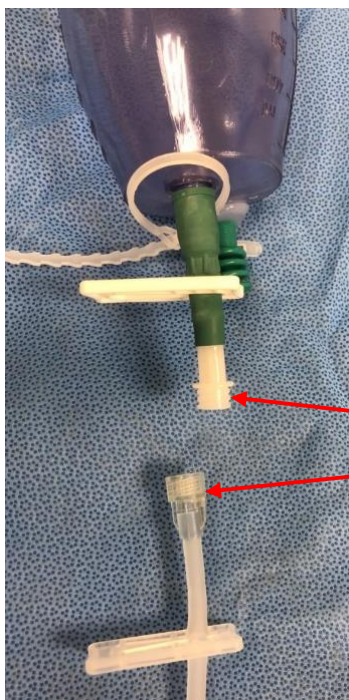


Correct: Drain is Not Clamped

Pictures courtesy of Dr Li Hao

3. Disconnection of Drainage Tube:

- The drainage tube should be connected to the bottle.
- If disconnection happens accidentally, clean both ends with an alcohol swab or clean towel before screwing them back tightly together.



To reconnect the drain, screw these tightly back together after you clean them with alcohol swab/clean towel.

Picture courtesy of Dr Li Hao

4. Drain Bottle is Full:

- Fully filled drain bottles will need to be changed. However, this rarely happens after discharge.
- If your drain bottle is full, visit Clinic 1B at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (Monday to Friday, 9.00am — 5.00pm) OR the Tan Tock Seng Hospital Emergency Department (after office hours or on weekends). Our doctors or nurses will attend to you.

Who can I contact if I need help?

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm, Monday to Friday:

Location: Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Clinic 1B at (+65) 6889 4180.

Time: 5.00pm — 9.00am, Monday to Friday, and on Weekends

Location: Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Emergency Department OR contact Tan Tock Seng Hospital Main Line at (+65) 6256 6011 to speak with the ENT medical officer on-call.