Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
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information

Abscess tube

Information for patients

What is an abscess tube?

An abscess tube is a thin tube placed through your skin into an infected area. Fluid in the infected area drains through the tube into a drainage bag outside the body.

How long will I need the abscess tube?

Some people need a tube for only a short time, while others may need it a bit longer. Speak with your doctor about how long you will need your tube.

Will I need help caring for the tube?

You might need help from a family member, friend, or home care nurse. Before you leave the hospital, your nurse will teach you and your family member or friend how to care for the tube. Your nurse will arrange for a home care nurse if one is needed.

What supplies will I need to care for my tube?

You will need the following supplies:

- ❒ Alcohol swabs
- ❒ Hydrogen peroxide
- ❒ Soap (liquid soap is best)
- ❒ Q tips
- ❒ Gauze
- ❒ Tape
- ❒ Two small containers and a pair of scissors that have been washed in hot soapy water and dried

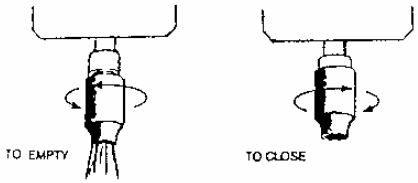
Your nurse will give you a starter set of supplies before you leave the hospital. Additional supplies can be purchased from your local pharmacy or from the CVS/ProCare Pharmacy (located in the lobby of the Shapiro Building on the east campus). The pharmacy's phone number is 617-731-8665. The CVS/ProCare pharmacy usually fills orders for these supplies within 24 hours.

Emptying the drainage bag

The drainage bag should be emptied when it is about ½ full or before it gets heavy.

To empty the drainage bag:

- Wash your hands with soap and water and dry well.
- Unscrew the cap at the bottom of the bag and let the contents drain into a cup or other container.



- Allow the bag to empty completely.
- Screw the cap back up tightly to close.
- Discard the drainage in the toilet.
- Wash your hands again with soap and water and dry well.

Changing the dressing

Your dressing should be changed every day. Follow these steps when changing the dressing:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water and dry well.
2. Gather together the materials you need to change the dressing.
3. Pour plain water into a clean container.
4. Have some soap available (liquid soap works best).
5. Remove the old gauze dressing. Be careful not to pull on the tube or you could dislodge it. It is best if you do not cut the dressing off because you might cut the tube. If you must use scissors, be very careful.
6. Moisten a Q-tip with liquid soap and water and gently clean the area where the tube enters the skin.
7. If there is a crust where the tube enters the skin, clean with a hydrogen peroxide solution. Pour equal amounts of water and hydrogen peroxide into another clean container. Use a Q-tip moistened with this solution to clean the area until the crust is removed.
8. Rinse the area with another Q-tip dipped in water.
9. Dry the area well with a gauze. Pat the area dry, do not rub.
10. Be sure the device holding the tube in place is still intact. If it isn't, call for help. (Use numbers on the last page of this sheet.)
11. If your doctor has instructed you to use "skin prep" pads on the area, use these now. Gently swab the area where the dressing and tape will be with a pad.
12. Cover the site with a new gauze pad. Use a gauze with a slit in the middle. (You may cut a slit into the gauze with clean scissors if needed.) Put the gauze next to your skin, bring the tube into the slit, and lay the tube on top of the gauze. Put another gauze over the tube.
13. Tape the top gauze in place, being careful not to place tape directly on the tube or on any stitches that you may have.
14. Wash your hands with soap and water and dry well after changing the dressing.

May I take a shower or bath while the tube is in place?

Follow these guidelines:

- Do not swim or take a tub bath while the tube is in place.
- After your tube has been in place for 24 hours, you may take a shower. Try to keep the dressing as dry as possible. Whenever you take a shower, protect the dressing by taping plastic wrap over it. After the shower, remove the plastic wrap and change the dressing.
- *Always* change the dressing after it gets wet.

important things to remember

Protect the tube to be sure it is safe from pulls and tugs:

- Keep the tube secured so it cannot pull back into the skin or get pulled out.
- Be sure the tubing does not kink or catch on your clothing.
- Make sure the drainage bag is secure and doesn't pull on the tubing.
- Empty the drainage bag before it gets heavy or when it is about ½ full.

Call for help if you have problems

Call someone from radiology (see box for numbers) you have any of the following:

- Pain
- The tube stops draining
- You have trouble taking care of your tube
- Any questions about your tube.

If you have problems --

- Monday through Friday, 8 am to 6pm, call **617-667-4700** and ask for the radiology nurse, beeper #33020.
- At night or on weekends, call **617-667-4700** and ask for the radiology resident on call.

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