



Flushing your drainage tube

Flushing your drainage tube helps to keep it unblocked and clear. You should flush your tube _____.

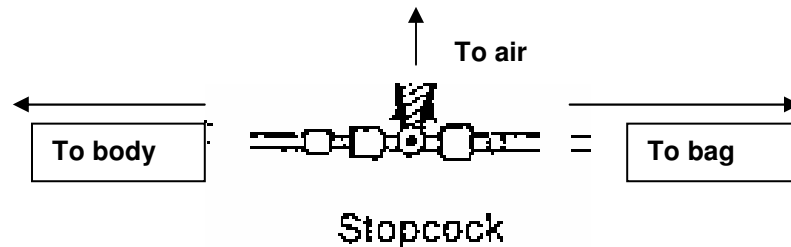
Some tubes are attached to a drainage bag. Others have a cap on the end. Use the instructions that match the type of tube you have. If you are not sure which instructions to use, please ask your nurse.

Gather your supplies

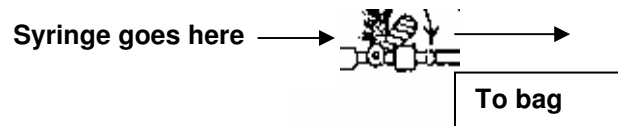
- Alcohol swab
- 10 cc syringe pre-filled with saline

How to flush a tube that has a stopcock and a drainage bag

The tube that comes out of your body is connected to a device called a stopcock. The stopcock has three openings, or “ports.” One port is connected to the tube in your body, one is connected to your drainage bag, and the third port leads to the outside air.



The stopcock is like a switch on a railroad track. It can be used to open and close various “routes” or pathways connected to your tube. A lever on the stopcock is used to change which route is open or closed. The lever always points to a pathway that is **closed**. In the picture above, the lever is shown in stripes. It is pointing to the air. So the pathway leading to the air is closed. The pathway leading from the body to the bag is open.



To flush your tube:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water and dry well.
2. Take the cap off the port that leads to the air. Put the cap on a table so that the part that connects to the tube is facing up. This keeps the tip clean.
3. Wipe the port with an alcohol swab.
4. Remove the cap from the saline syringe.
5. Screw the syringe into this port.
6. Move the lever on the stopcock *toward the bag*. (This closes the pathway from the air to the bag.)
7. Push the syringe plunger gently but steadily, injecting the contents into the tube.
8. Turn the lever on the stopcock back to where it was. It should be pointing to the syringe.
9. Unscrew the syringe.
10. Replace the cap on the port that leads to air.

information

11. Wash your hands again and dry well.

How to flush a tube that ends in a cap

Some tubes are not connected to drainage bags. They are closed off at the end with a cap. (In rare cases, a stopcock is attached to the cap. If you have a stopcock, refer to the material on page one that describes a stopcock. Make sure when you are flushing your tube that the path from the syringe to the tube is “open.” If you do not understand, or you don’t know if your tube has a stopcock or not, please ask your nurse.)

To flush a tube that ends in a cap:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water and dry well.
2. Remove the cap by unscrewing it from the tube. Put the cap on a table so that the part that connects to the tube is facing up. This keeps the tip clean.
3. Take the cap off the syringe.
4. Place the syringe into the end of your tube.
5. Push the syringe plunger gently but steadily, injecting the contents into the tube.
6. Remove the syringe from the tube.
7. Replace the cap.
8. Wash your hands again and dry well.

If the tube stops draining

If your tube is attached to an outside bag and the tube stops draining:

- Make sure the pathway from the tube to the bag is open. That is, the pathway to the air is closed. The stopcock lever should point to the air.
- Check for kinks in the tube. If a kink is present, re-tape the tube so that it lies smoothly.
- Inspect the tube to see if something is blocking the inside of the tube. Try flushing the tube to remove the blockage.
- If you are unable to flush the tube with the syringe, try pulling back on the syringe plunger lightly before pushing.
- Call for help if you are unable to flush the tube.

Call the doctor or nurse if you have problems

Call for help if you experience any of the following:

- You have pain when you flush the tube.
- Fluid is leaking from the area where the tube enters the skin.
- It is difficult to flush the tube (it is hard to push the fluid out of the syringe).
- You are unable to flush the tube.