

Drainage Tube Patient Information

What is a Drainage Tube?

A drainage tube is used to remove fluid or air from around an organ in the body. The tube acts as a pathway, allowing the fluid or air to drain away from the area into a bag or bottle.

These procedures are performed in the X-ray department by an Interventional Radiologist (X-ray specialist). Ultrasound and/or X-ray imaging helps the doctor to guide and position the tube into the exact place.

Why do I need this procedure?

There are different types of surgical drainage tubes and many reasons why a patient may need one. If you have been told you need a drainage tube, it means that your body needs help getting the extra fluid out of it, or there is an organ in trouble due to the collection of too much fluid.

Sometimes a drainage tube can get blocked, broken or move out of position and you may have to get the tube checked. The Interventional Radiologist may decide to exchange the tube, if the old one doesn't work anymore.

What should I expect?

You will be asked to sign a consent form. It is important that you understand the procedure and its benefits and risks. Bring a family member or friend with you, to help with your questions or concerns about the procedure. On the day of the procedure, you will have an intravenous line (IV) placed into a vein in your arm. This IV line will also be used to give you other medicines and fluids during the procedure.

You will be asked to lie on your back or on your side, depending on where the Radiologist has decided is most suitable. You will be given local anaesthetic and a small cut made for the tube, which is positioned using ultrasound or x-ray imaging. Once it is in place, the end of the tube that is outside your body, is connected to a drainage bag or bottle. It usually takes about 1 hour to perform, but this is not an absolute timeline.

What happens after the procedure?

You may be a little sore after the procedure, but this should gradually disappear. If you are an inpatient, or being admitted, you will go to your hospital room where the staff will monitor you. Each patient's length of stay will vary.

If you are an outpatient and/or having your drainage tube changed only, then you will go to the Same Day Surgery unit (SDS) to recover. Due to the medication you will receive, you won't be allowed to drive yourself. Make sure you arrange for someone to take you home.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Diagnostic Imaging Department at 416-431-8107 (General campus) or 416-495-2480 (Birchmount campus).