

# Caring for Your ReliaVac® Drain

## Introduction

This booklet has information you will need to care for your ReliaVac® drain. It explains how to measure your drainage after you leave the hospital and are at home. It is a review of the instruction you received from your nurse. It is easy to use and once you have been shown how, you will be able to care for it yourself.

The ReliaVac drain is made up of a clear plastic collection container with a balloon inside. (See Figure 1.) The container is attached to a connector tube. At the end of the connector tube there is a Y-shaped connection. One or two small tubings called drains are attached to this connection. These drains are thin plastic tubes that are inserted near your incision(s) (suture lines). This is done during your surgery. The drains are used to prevent pooling of fluid at and around your surgical site(s). They do this by directing the flow of drainage away from the site(s). When the balloon is inflated, it creates a constant, gentle suction. This helps draw out the fluid that collects under your incision. The balloon should be inflated at all times except when you empty and measure your drainage or if you have been told otherwise by your doctor or nurse. The amount of drainage is very individual; some people drain a lot, some only a little. You may have more than one drain (tubing) in place.

The length of time that you will have your drains depends on your surgery and the amount of drainage. Having more drainage than another patient does not mean that there is a problem. You should not be alarmed if you need your drain longer than someone else. Your ReliaVac Drain will be removed when your drainage has decreased. Usually, it has to decrease to less than 30 cc (one ounce) in 24 hours. If you have more than one drain, the total amount for all drains must be less than 30 cc in 24 hours. If you go home with your drain you need to call your nurse or doctor with your 24-hour drain output. Your doctor or nurse will decide when you should come in to have your drain(s) removed. This will be based on the drainage record you keep on pages 6 and 7. You must bring this booklet with you so your drainage record can be reviewed at follow-up visits.

To Care for your ReliaVac at home you will need to:

1. Milk the tubing. This will help remove clots and ensure continuous flow of the system.
2. Empty the container at least twice a day. You must record the amount of drainage in your drainage record.
3. Add your morning and evening outputs. You must record the total amount for every 24-hour period.
4. Care for your drain insertion site. This is the area where the catheter enters your skin.
5. Recognize when there is a problem.

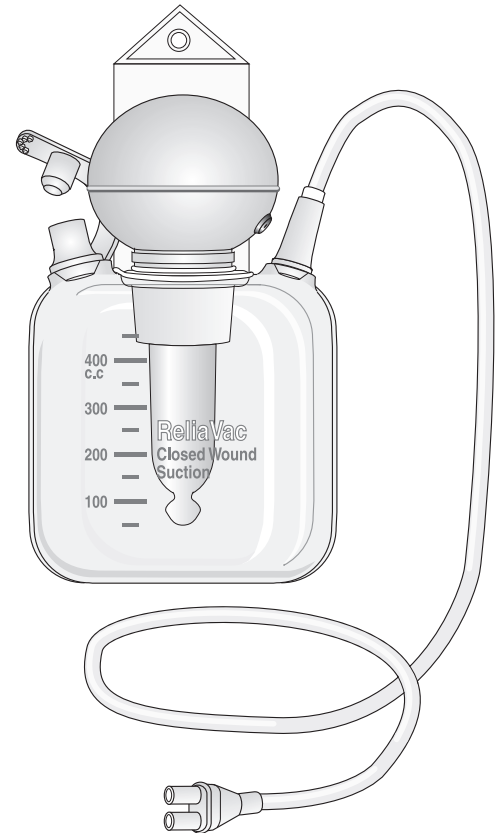


Figure 1

## Milking The Tubing

These steps will help you move clots through the tubing and promote the flow of your drainage. Milk the tubing before you empty and measure your drainage. You will need to do it more often if the drainage flow is sluggish or if it stops suddenly.

1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. Dry them thoroughly.
2. Look at the tubing while standing in front of a mirror. This will help you see where your hands need to be.
3. Pick a point close to the insertion site and pinch and hold the tubing. Do this using your thumb and forefinger of one hand. This will help prevent tugging at the insertion site.
4. With the thumb and forefinger of your other hand, pinch the tubing right below your other fingers. Keeping your fingers pinched, slide them down the tubing as far as they will reach. If there is still tubing between your lower hand and the Y-connector, keep the lower fingers pinched and release your upper fingers. Pinch the tubing right below the fingers of your lower hand. Slide them down the tubing as far as you can reach. Repeat this until you reach the Y-connector. You may use alcohol swabs given to you by your nurse to help you slide your fingers down the tubing.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 as needed to remove all clots from your tubing. Do this until you see fluid move through the tubing into the collection container. If you are unable to move a clot into the collection container and your drain has suddenly stopped draining, call your doctor. The telephone number is on page 5.

## To Empty Your ReliaVac and Record the Drainage

You must empty your container twice a day. Empty it in the morning and in the evening. You may need to empty it more often if you have a large amount of drainage output.

### Equipment Needed:

- Measuring container given to you by your nurse
- ReliaVac Drainage Record on pages 6 and 7 of this booklet.

### Steps:

1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. Dry them thoroughly.
2. Unplug the stopper on top of your ReliaVac. (See Figure 1.) This will cause the balloon inside the container to deflate. Do not touch the inside of the stopper and the inner area of the drainage outlet.
3. Pour the contents of the container into the measuring cup. (Figure 2).
4. Turn your ReliaVac right side up.
5. Pump the bulb until the balloon completely fills the container.

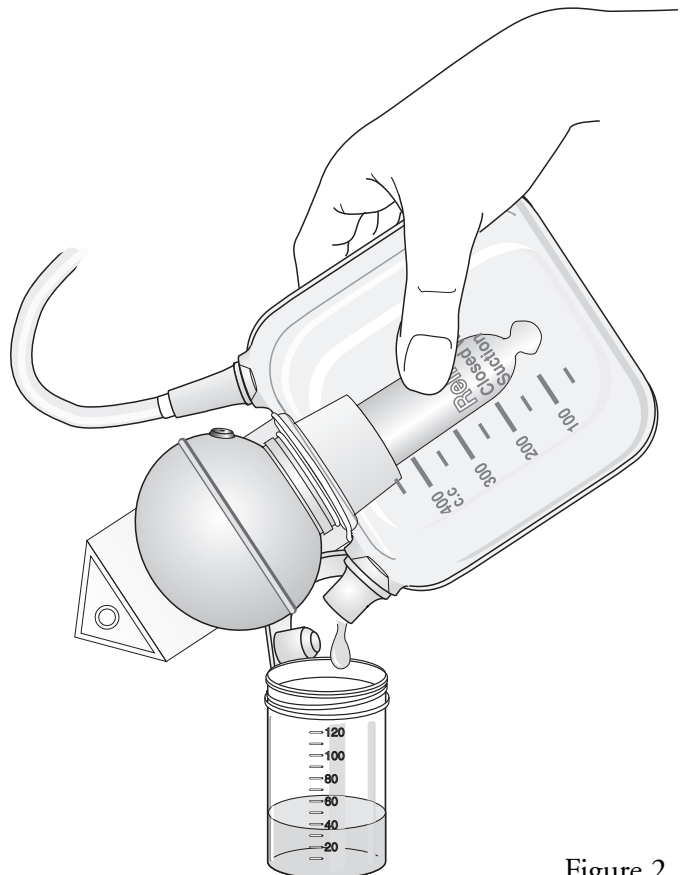


Figure 2

6. Continue to squeeze the bulb while you re-plug the stopper. After re-plugging the stopper, you will hear a hissing sound. This is normal and will stop after a few seconds.
7. Check to see that the balloon stays fully inflated. This will assure a constant gentle suction.
8. Pin the collar of your container to your clothing. Do not let it dangle. A “fanny pack” or belt bag may be helpful to hold the container.
9. Check the amount of your drainage in the measuring cup.
10. Record this amount in your drainage record. Empty your drainage in the toilet and rinse the measuring cup with water.
11. At the end of the each day, add the total amount of your drainage for the 24-hour period. Record this amount in the “Total” column.

## **Caring For Your Insertion Site**

Once you have emptied your drainage, wash your hands again. Check the area around the insertion site. This is the area where the tubing enters your skin. Your insertion site may be covered with a dressing. Your doctor or nurse will give you instructions about dressings, if needed. It is normal for the drain to cause some redness at your insertion or suture site.

You must call your doctor immediately if you have any signs of infection. This includes:

- Increased tenderness
- Swelling
- Pus
- A temperature of 101° F (38.3° C) or more

## **Problems You May Encounter With Your ReliaVac**

### **Problem:**

Deflated balloon inside the ReliaVac.

### **Why?**

- The bulb was not fully inflated.
- The stopper is not closed securely.
- The tubing is separated from the Y-connector.
- Air leaks at the drain site, causing the loss of vacuum pressure in the container.
- The balloon may be torn.

### **What To Do:**

1. Check to make sure the tubing is securely attached to the Y-connector.
2. Inflate the balloon using steps 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 on pages 2 and 3. These steps are under “To Empty Your ReliaVac and Record Your Drainage.”
3. If the balloon is still deflated, call your doctor or nurse.

**Problems:**

- The dressing on your insertion site is wet because of leakage from the tubing.
- No drainage is in your collection container.
- A sudden decrease in the amount of your drainage.

**Why?**

Sometimes “string-like” clots build up in the tubing. This blocks the flow of drainage. Your ReliaVac can often work well in spite of this.

**What To Do:**

1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. Dry them well.
2. Use your thumb and forefinger to squeeze and release the Y-connector twice. While you are doing this, watch to see if the fluid in the tubing moves. If the fluid moves, your drain is working. If the fluid does not move, call your physician or nurse.

**Problems:**

- Increased redness greater than the size of a dime around your insertion site.
- Swelling, heat, or pus around the insertion site.
- New increased tenderness or pain around your insertion site.
- A body temperature of 101° F (38.3° C) or more.

**Why?**

These are signs and symptoms of a possible infection.

**What To Do:**

- Take your temperature. If it is 101° F (38.3° C) or higher, record it and the time you took it.
- Call your doctor or nurse to report these changes. They will give you further instructions.
- Change the dressing on your insertion site as needed. The goal is to keep your dressing clean and dry.

**Problem:**

The ReliaVac tubing (drain) accidentally falls out.

**Why?**

This may occur if there is tension on the tubing. But, it rarely happens because the tubing is held in place with stitches.

**What To Do:**

- You may have some drainage from the place where the drain used to be. It looks like a small pea-size hole in your skin. Apply a new dressing over your insertion site and call your doctor.

**When to Call Your Doctor or Nurse**

Call immediately if:

- Your ReliaVac drainage becomes bright red in color.
- You notice a sudden increase in the amount of your drainage.
- You have a fever of 101° F (38.3° C) or higher.
- Your insertion site has increased:
  - Redness.
  - Tenderness.
  - Swelling.
  - Pus.

Call during business hours (9 A.M. to 5 P.M., Monday to Friday), if:

- The amount of drainage goes up or down by 100 cc over 24 hours.
- Your tubing accidentally falls out.
- You are unable to inflate the balloon.
- You are unable to move a clot from the tubing into the container. If this happens on the weekend or a holiday, you may call on the next business day.

If you have an emergency after 5 P.M., call (212) 639-7900 and ask for the doctor on call.

## Conclusion

Your nurse will work with you until you are able to care for your drainage system on your own. He or she will watch you the first time you empty the drainage to make sure you are doing it correctly. Even after you have begun to care for it yourself, we are always here to help. If you encounter any problems after discharge, call your nurse or your doctor. You may write their telephone numbers in the next section.

## Important Telephone Numbers

Doctor \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Nurse \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

After 5 P.M. or during the weekend, call (212) 639-7900 and ask for the doctor on call.



