

Chest Tubes

Chest Tube

There are many reasons to use a chest tube. Your doctor or nurse can talk with you about your specific condition.

A chest tube is a clear, flexible tube that is usually inserted into the lower side of the chest. It is used to drain fluids, to restore the normal air pressure inside the chest, or both.

- The tip of the tube rests in the space between the lung and the chest wall.
- The chest tube is connected to a disposable drainage container hanging by your bed. Fluids and air from the chest drain into this container.
- By draining fluids and air from the chest, the chest tube helps inflate the lung to improve breathing.
- The chest tube will be attached to suction, which may cause a bubbling sound.

Discomfort

You may have some discomfort when the tube is inserted. To reduce discomfort, the area where the tube will be placed is numbed with medicine.

Once the tube is in place, there may still be some discomfort at the site. Pain medicine will be available for you to help ease the discomfort.

Exercises

It is important that you do regular deep breathing and coughing exercises while the chest tube is in.

These exercises help to drain secretions and air from the chest. They also help prevent other breathing problems.

- Take deep breaths every hour when you are awake.
- Use your incentive spirometer 10 times every 1 to 2 hours. (Your nurse will give you instructions on how to use it.)
- A nurse will help you when you get up in a chair or when you walk.

Other Information

- You will also have chest X-rays done to check how your lungs are re-expanding. This is usually done in your room until you are able to go to the X-ray Department in a wheelchair.
- Your chest tubes will be removed when your lungs are re-expanded and there is no more drainage from the tube.