

PleurX Catheters:

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: *How often should I drain the fluid from my chest?*

A: You should drain fluid whenever you are short of breath. This is usually every two to five days. If you keep your chest fairly free of fluid, you will be less likely to feel short of breath.

Q: *What if I still feel short of breath after I have finished draining?*

A: You should not drain more than 1000 ml per drainage. Therefore, you should use no more than two 500 ml bottles. Notify your doctor if you continue to feel very short of breath after draining two bottles.

Q: *What if I develop chest pain during the drainage?*

A: Chest pain can develop from the suction coming from the vacuum bottle. A little chest discomfort and a cough are normal during the drainage procedure. If the chest pain or cough intensify (get much worse), stop the drainage. The pain and cough should disappear within 10-20 minutes. If they do not, contact your nurse or doctor's office.

Q: *What if the drainage bottle won't drain fluid?*

A: Due to the composition of pleural fluid, it is possible for fibrous material (clumps) to be drawn into the catheter causing it to become plugged, preventing flow into the bottle. This occurs most often at the tip of the drainage line once it has been inserted into the catheter valve. Should this occur, gently squeeze the catheter where it joins the catheter valve, then gently squeeze the drainage line near the access tip. This may loosen the material lodged at the connection. If this does not cause immediate flow into the bottle, disconnect this drainage line and bottle and try a second bottle. If use of a second bottle does not permit drainage, do not panic. Notify your nurse or doctor's office.

Q: *How long will the catheter be in my chest?*

A: The catheter will be in your chest until fluid stops draining from your chest. The amount of time will vary from patient to patient, but usually several months.

Q: *When will I know that the catheter can be removed?*

A: When you try to drain fluid from your chest 3 times in a row, and each time less than 25–50 ml drains into the bottle, you should see your doctor to find out if the catheter can be removed or if it needs to be replaced.

Q: *What should I do if the color of the fluid changes from the usual color?*

A: Sometimes the fluid may become pink. This is normal. Any change in the appearance of the fluid should be reported to your nurse or doctor's office.

Q: *Can I take a shower with the catheter inside my chest?*

A: Yes, if a self-adhesive dressing, like the one in the Procedure Pack, is securely attached to your skin, you can get wet. The self-adhesive dressing is designed to keep fluid out. Be sure the dressing is completely and securely attached and that the catheter and gauze pads are all contained underneath it. If the gauze becomes wet when showering, remove the dressing, clean and dry the area and apply a new dressing as instructed on pages 11-13.