

The Jackson-Pratt (JP) drain is a special tube that prevents body fluid from collecting near the site of your surgery. The drain pulls this fluid (by suction) into a bulb. The bulb can then be emptied and the fluid inside measured.

At first, this fluid is bloody. As the wound heals, the fluid changes to light pink, light yellow, or clear. The amount of time the drain stays in will depend on the amount of fluid removed. You will record fluid amounts and your veterinary team will assess the amount of fluid within the first 24 hours. Our goal is to have that initial amount of fluid cut into half and then half again before drain removal. This is patient and wound dependent, but overall fluid trends will be monitored for a gradual decrease and/or plateau in fluid amounts. In general, 3-5 days of drain care is to be expected.

Caring for the JP drain is easy. Depending on how much fluid drains from the surgical site, the bulb may need to be emptied every 4-6 hours for the first 24 hours. This may be extended to every 8 hours if fluid production has slowed down after the first 24 hours. The bulb should be emptied sooner if it reaches 50% capacity or half full.

Before your pet is discharged from the hospital, your veterinary team will show you how to empty, record fluid volume and care for the drain:

How to empty the drain

- Wash your hands well with soap and water. Wear gloves, if possible.
- Pull the plug out of the bulb. Wipe the bulb with alcohol swab.
- Pour the fluid inside the bulb into a measuring cup.

Alternatively, use a clean syringe to attach tightly to the bulb. With the syringe attached turn the bulb upside down and pull the syringe plunger to collect fluid from the bulb.

- Clean the plug with alcohol. Then squeeze the bulb flat or roll the bulb from bottom to top. While the bulb is flat or rolled, put the plug back into the bulb. The bulb should stay flat after it is plugged so that the vacuum suction can function properly. If you can't squeeze the bulb flat and plug it at the same time, use a hard, flat surface (such as a table) to help you press the bulb flat while you replug it.
- Replace the bulb and drain to pet (T shirt or Bandage wrap). Make sure that the tubing is not kinked and that the pet cannot lick, chew or kick the drain tubing. Be sure not to kink or bend the tubing.
- Record the fluid volume (date/time/fluid volume/color appearance)
- Wash your hands well with soap and water, wear gloves if possible.

How to care for the skin and the drain site

- Wash your hands well with soap and water. Wear gloves, if possible.
- Remove the dressing from around the drain. Use soap and water (on a gauze or cotton swab) to clean the drain site and the skin around it. Clean this area once a day.
- When the drain site is clean and dry, put a new dressing/covering/gauze around the drain.
- Place the old dressing into the trash. If it is soiled, wrap it in a small plastic bag (like a sandwich bag).
- Wash your hands.

Complications

- Sometimes, a large amount of fluid may leak from around the drain site, making the gauze dressing wet. If this happens, use soap and water to clean the area (see above). Verify that the bulb drain is secured and “flat” to provide the needed suction.
- Another potential side effect is the development of a clot within the drain that clogs fluid flow. This appears as a dark, stringy lining. It could prevent the drainage from flowing through the tube.
- *Be sure to notify your veterinary team if either of these complications occurs.*

SAMPLE CHART FOR FLUID RECORDING

DATE	TIME	VOLUME(ML)	COLOR	NOTES

DAY 1 TOTAL: _____

DATE	TIME	VOLUME(ML)	COLOR	NOTES

DAY 2 TOTAL: _____