

CHEST DRAIN DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS



Your pet has been discharged from hospital with a **chest drain (thoracostomy tube)** in place. This drain is used to remove fluid or air from around the lungs and helps your pet breathe more comfortably while recovering.

It is **essential that the drain is managed carefully at home** to avoid complications and ensure a smooth recovery.

How Often to Empty the Drain

The chest drain should be checked and emptied **every 4 hours**, or as directed by your veterinary team. If fluid builds up too much, it can cause difficulty breathing or distress.

Before You Begin

- **Wash your hands thoroughly.**
- Gather: a **sterile syringe**, a **measuring jug**, and **clean gloves** (if available).
- Ensure your pet is calm and safely restrained.

Step-by-Step Guide to Emptying the Chest Drain

1. **Open a clean syringe** and keep it sterile.
2. **Remove the cap** from the end of the drain – place the cap somewhere clean and do not allow it to touch the floor.
3. **Attach the syringe** firmly to the drain.
4. **Unclamp the drain.**
5. **Gently pull back on the syringe plunger** to draw out fluid. Take your time – suction should be steady but not forceful.
6. **Stop when:**
 - No more fluid comes out, or
 - The syringe becomes full
7. **Remove the syringe** and empty the contents into the measuring jug.
8. **Reattach the syringe** and repeat the process if needed until no more fluid is removed.
9. Once finished, **remove the syringe, replace the cap**, and **clamp the drain**.
10. **Record the amount of fluid** removed each time.
11. **Wash your hands again.**

 The chest drain has a **one-way valve** – this prevents air from being sucked into your pet's chest, which is vital for safety.

Important Safety Tips

- **Never leave your pet unattended** without an **Elizabethan collar** (cone) while the drain is in place – this prevents them from pulling or chewing at it.
- Keep the drain **covered at all times** using a bandage wrap or a snug t-shirt to avoid it catching on furniture or being pulled.

- **Restrict activity:** no running, jumping, or rough play.
- **Avoid contact with other pets** to reduce the risk of injury or disturbance to the drain site.

When to Contact the Clinic Immediately

Call your veterinarian or nearest emergency centre **right away** if you notice:



- **Air bubbles or hissing from the drain**
- **Purple or blue colouring of your pet's tongue or gums**
- **No fluid draining** when it is expected
- **Any signs of distress, coughing, or difficulty breathing**
- **You are unsure or worried about any aspect of the drain or your pet's behaviour**

Out-of-Hours Care

If your concern arises outside of clinic hours, please contact your **nearest emergency veterinary hospital** for immediate advice and assistance.

We understand that caring for a pet with a chest drain can be daunting. If you have **any questions or concerns**, no matter how small, **please call us** — we're here to support you and your pet through their recovery!