



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Going Home After Thoracic Surgery

What is a chest tube for?

The chest tube helps remove air or fluid around the lung so it can expand back into place.

A chest tube may be placed:

- After thoracic surgery;
- When fluid builds up around the lung (pleural effusion);
- When air builds up around the lung (pneumothorax).

What should you do when you return home?

- Take your temperature every day;
- Keep the drainage box lower than your hip level;
- Check that the tube is not bent, blocked, or clamped;
- Avoid showers or baths (the dressing must stay clean and dry);
- Make sure you do not develop new breathing problems;
- Make sure the drainage box does not fill more than three-quarters full;
- Stay as active as possible within your limits: keep moving;
- Have your dressing changed by a CLSC nurse every 3–4 days and as needed;
- Contact the CLSC if your drainage box falls. It should be replaced within 24–48 hours;
- If your pain does not improve, take the narcotic with the acetaminophen (Tylenol®).

When to get help?

Call the thoracic surgery team if:

- You have pain that does not go away with your prescribed medication;
- The CLSC needs to change your dressing more than once a day.

Go to the emergency department if:

- Your mouth temperature is higher than 38°C (100°F);
- The fluid in the tube changes color (dark red, green, milky white, etc.);
- You feel new severe pain in your chest or shoulder;
- You become more out of breath or have trouble breathing;
- You notice swelling or pain in one of your legs;
- Your chest tube comes out accidentally (apply a dressing immediately);
- The tube becomes disconnected from the drainage box (reconnect it immediately).



How to Get Help?



For questions related to the chest tube, pain, or surgery:

- Call the thoracic surgery team: 819-346-1110, extension 74356 (response within 24–48 hours, Monday to Friday, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.)

For questions related to the dressing(s) or the drainage box:

- Call a CLSC (24 hours a day, 7 days a week):
 - o Coaticook: 819-849-9102
 - o Memphrémagog: 819-843-2572
 - o Granit: 819-583-2572
 - o Val-Saint-François: 819-542-2777
 - o Sherbrooke: 819-780-2222
 - o Haut-Saint-François: 819-821-4000
 - o Haute-Yamaska: 450-375-8000
 - o La Pommeraië:
 - CLSC Cowansville-Larouche: 450-263-3242
 - CLSC Cowansville-du-Sud: 450-266-4304
 - o Des Sources: 819-879-7158



For any non-urgent health problem not related to your surgery:

You **do not** have a family doctor or a nurse practitioner: call 811, option 3;

You **do** have a family doctor or a nurse practitioner: call their office.



For any emergency:

Call 911 or go to the emergency department of the hospital closest to you.

Reminders

Your appointment dates: _____

Notes: _____

