

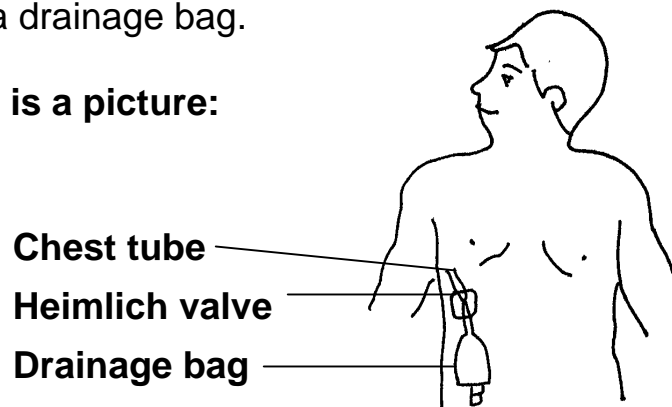
A Heimlich Valve for Chest Drainage

What is a Heimlich Valve?

When you have a chest tube you may have a Heimlich valve attached to the end of the tube. The Heimlich valve is a one-way valve that prevents fluid and air from going back into your chest.

The chest tube drains air and fluid from around the lung. The Heimlich valve allows the fluid and air to come out of your body into a drainage bag.

Here is a picture:



Heimlich Valve with Drainage Bag

The Heimlich valve and drainage bag allows you to walk around more freely without having to carry long tubing and a large collection system. You may go home with a chest tube, Heimlich valve and drainage bag.

The chest tube and valve stay in until the excess fluid or air in your chest is gone and your lungs stay inflated.

Heimlich Valve with gauze cover

Some people have small gauze over the end of the Heimlich valve. This allows air to escape. **It is important to remember not to tape the end of the valve.** The end must remain open to allow air out all the time.

please turn over →

Skin Care

You will need to watch the skin where the chest tube goes into your body. Look for redness, itching, swelling and any fluid leaking out around the tube.

You or a visiting nurse will change the dressing around the tube every day and when it is dirty. You and a family member may learn how to do this in the hospital.

You can shower. Cover the skin where the tube goes into your body with a small plastic bag and tape well. You can take the drainage bag in the shower with you.

Drainage Bag

You can wear the drainage bag under your clothes. Most people will never know you have a chest tube or drainage bag.

If you are draining fluid from your chest, empty the drainage bag before it is full. You should empty the bag before you go out as well.

If you are draining air from your lungs, the bag may inflate like a balloon. Your doctor may suggest you poke a few holes at the top of the bag to allow the air out.

Activity and exercise

You can return to most of your usual activities when you go home. You can exercise but be careful not to pull on the chest tube. You cannot swim with a chest tube.

Most people find it more comfortable to sleep on the side without the chest tube. You can resume your normal sexual activities when you feel comfortable.

Call your doctor if:

- you have pain that increases
- the amount of fluid increases or the colour has changed
- you get a fever
- you feel unwell
- you have questions or concerns

Your surgeon will arrange a follow-up appointment with you.
