

## DRAIN PLACEMENT/CARE/MANAGEMENT

Drains are latex tubes placed in wounds with pockets where fluid/puss might accumulate. They are placed in a pocket where the skin has been detached from underlying tissues such that fluid will drain around (not through) the tube following gravity. Drainage from a pocket is important because accumulation of fluid under the skin is an excellent place for bacteria to grow.

Drains are generally left in place for 3-5 days, then removed as a quick outpatient procedure. Some very large pockets with active fluid production may require drainage for a longer period of time. They should be non-painful while in place. The owner should check the drain at home at least twice a day to be sure it is staying in place and that the animal is not licking/chewing at it and traumatizing the area. The material draining should be monitored as well. Any changes in the character of the draining material (thickness, color, turbidity etc.) should be reported to the veterinarian. In addition, any changes in the skin around the site (redness, warmth to the touch, painfulness etc.) should be reported. If an animal is getting at the site and disrupting the drain, an e-collar or T-shirt to cover the area will be necessary.

The drain site should be kept clean, especially when the draining material is drying/caking around it. Warm water is usually enough to remove debris and dried material. The area should be cleaned as frequently as needed. Avoid applying ointments/cremes to the area as they often inhibit good drainage and draw the animal's attention to the area precipitating licking/chewing. Also, avoid applying alcohol and soap solutions that may irritate the tissues around the drain. It is a good idea to warm compress the area (using a wash cloth wet with tepid warm water) 10-15 minutes twice daily. This helps to promote drainage and remove dried debris.

It is most important to follow-up with the veterinarian as directed. A drain should never be left in place indefinitely or ignored. Complications with drains can develop if they are cared for improperly or ignored. Drains are applied to help an area heal properly, but they can become a problem if not cared for or if left in too long without inspection by a veterinarian.