GENERAL INFORMATION

You have had fluid build up in the space between your lung and the lining that surrounds your lung (pleural space). This fluid makes it harder for you to breathe. To help you breathe better, your doctor has decided to put a drainage tube (chest tube) in that space to draw out the fluid. You will be going home with this tube in place. It will be attached to a drainage bag that you will be taught to empty at home. It is important to keep accurate record of how much fluid you empty out of the bag each day. When almost all of the fluid has been drained out of the pleural space, you will come back to see your doctor. Your doctor will have you come back to radiology to have the chest tube removed.

DRESSING CHANGES

- Change dressing every 1-2 days or after a shower.
- Wash hands thoroughly, remove old dressing, clean around tube with cotton balls moistened with hydrogen peroxide and pat dry.
- Apply antibiotic ointment (Neosporin or Bacitracin) to skin around tube.
- Apply new clean dressing, being careful to position tube so that it does not kink.

WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR

- If you have increased pain where tube is inserted.
- If you become MORE short of breath
- If you develop a fever greater than 100.5º.
- When the drainage decreases to less than 20 ml’s in a 48 hour period
- If there is fluid leaking around the chest tube.
- If you have any questions or concerns.
- If tube falls out, cover the hole in the skin with gauze pads and tape.
- If you are having difficulty breathing, please go to nearest emergency room immediately.

ACTIVITY

- No bathtubs, hot tubs, or swimming.
- You may shower, however, before showering, cover dressing with a double layer of plastic wrap (e.g. Saran Wrap) and tape edges to skin. After shower, remove plastic wrap. Change dressing if it has gotten wet.
- Avoid any activity that causes a pulling sensation or pain around the tube, or kinking of the tube.

Important Reminder
Make sure the stopcock is in the OFF position when emptying the bag.
Department of Radiology

It has been our pleasure to participate in your care.

Please feel free to call our office with any questions.

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