

Going Home with a Chest Tube and Heimlich Valve

What is a Chest Tube and Heimlich Valve?

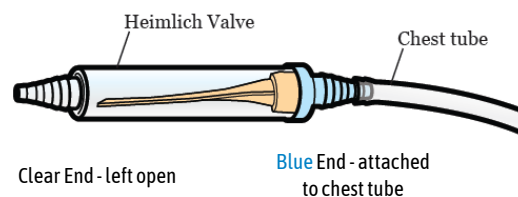
A chest tube is a flexible tube that is placed between your ribs into the space between the lung and the chest wall, also known as the pleural space.

A Heimlich valve is a one-way valve that is connected to the chest tube to allow air to flow out of your chest through a chest tube when you breathe out (exhale), but prevents air from re-entering your pleural space when you breathe in.

A chest tube and Heimlich valve are used to relieve excess air from the chest to re-expand the lung; making it easier for you to breath.

The clear end of the valve is left open to allow the excess air to escape.

The blue end is attached to the chest tube.



The chest tube and valve stay in until the excess air in your pleural space is gone and your lungs have re-expanded.

Care Instructions

Wound Dressing

- You may attach gauze to the clear end of the valve if there is small amount of drainage. **DO NOT** cover or tape the clear end of the valve.
- The chest tube insertion site will be covered with a bandage.
 - Change the bandage if the bandage gets wet, dirty, comes loose, or starts to lift from your skin.
- Skin care: Watch for increasing redness, swelling, and any discharge leaking out around the tube insertion site. If any of these occur, please contact the Emergency Department.

Cleaning and Showering

- You can shower or sponge bathe. Cover the skin where the tube goes into your body (insertion site) with either a small plastic bag and tape well or cover with a waterproof dressing.
- Use a hand-held showerhead, if you have one. The hand-held showerhead can help direct water away from your bandage.
- Change any wet bandages.
- **DO NOT** take a bath, use a hot tub, go swimming, or submerge yourself in water while the chest tube is in place.

Sleeping

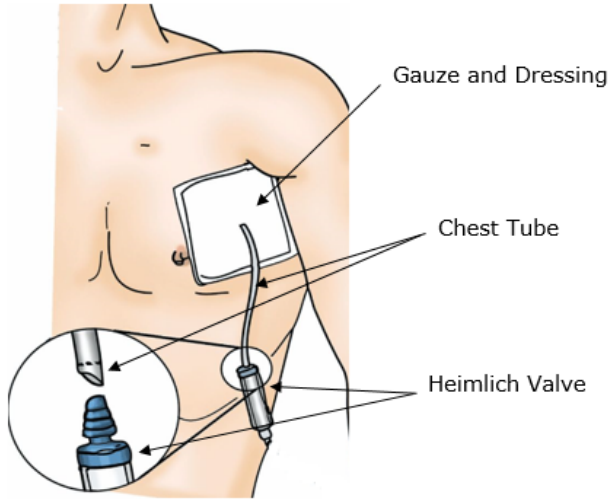
Most people find it more comfortable to sleep on the side without the chest tube.

Everyday Care

- Take pain medication as instructed by the physician. The chest tube may irritate the chest wall and cause some discomfort.
- When performing any daily activities or routines be careful not to pull on or pull out the chest tube.
 - You may be sent home with extra care supplies such as gauze, bandages, and waterproof dressings.
 - You will have a follow-up appointment to be reassessed and for the removal of the chest tube.

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Fixing a Disconnected Heimlich Valve



Note: The blue end of the Heimlich valve attaches to the chest tube.

The Heimlich valve should **ALWAYS** be connected to your chest tube at all times. If it comes off your chest tube, follow the steps below to reconnect the valve right away, and then go to the Emergency Department (if required).

1. Push the blue end of the valve into the end of your chest tube. Make sure it is in the chest tube tightly.
2. Cough deeply a few times. This will help get rid of any extra air that may have built up around your lung while the valve was disconnected.
3. If you are unable to reconnect the Heimlich valve, use tape to cover the end of the chest tube and go immediately to the Emergency Department or call 911.

When to go to the Emergency Department

- You are not able to reconnect a disconnected Heimlich valve
- You become short of breath or have difficulty breathing
- Chest tube becomes dislodged or pulled out
- You have a fever of 38.0°C (100.4°F) or higher
- You have pain not relieved by pain medication
- If the drainage from your chest tube changes in smell, consistency, amount, and colour
- If there is discharge coming from the chest tube insertion site
- The skin around the bandage is:
 - Increasing in redness
 - Swelling
 - Increasing in pain
 - Warm/hot to touch

St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital - Emergency Department

519-631-2030, Extension 0

You will be transferred from Switchboard to the Emergency Department.



St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital - Chest Tube Heimlich Valve Discharge Care

VIDEO LINK: <https://vimeo.com/431820909/49d268414e>

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Follow-up Appointments

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Contact Information:

Instructions:

If you have questions or concerns, please contact your primary care provider.

In an emergency, please go to your nearest Emergency Department.