Heimlich Valve and Chest Tube

Discharge Instructions

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

A Heimlich valve is a one-way valve that is connected to the end of your chest tube. This valve allows air and fluid to move out of the chest to allow your lung to fully expand. The clear end of the valve may be left open or it may be attached to a drainage bag if there is fluid draining. The blue end of the valve is attached to the chest tube.

Caring for your Heimlich Valve and Chest Tube

- Your Healthcare Provider arranges for a Home Care Nurse to visit your home or for appointments at the Treatment Centre (See RQHR form 1114)
- Home Care Nurse:
  - Changes your bandage.
  - Empties drainage bag (if you have one).
  - Checks for infection.
- You may sponge bath. **DO NOT** take a tub bath or submerge in water.
- If you need a shower please discuss with your Home Care Nurse **BEFORE** showering. A waterproof dressing can be applied and a dressing change can be arranged for immediately after your shower.
- Take pain medication as instructed by your healthcare provider. The chest tube may irritate the chest wall and cause some discomfort.

Fixing a Disconnected Heimlich Valve

The Heimlich valve should **NEVER** be disconnected from the chest tube. If it should become disconnected:

- Reconnect immediately by inserting the **BLUE END** of the valve into the chest tube. Then call the Home Care Nurse or your healthcare provider.
- If you are not able to reconnect valve, turn stopcock off (if one is present) or use tape to cover the end of the chest tube and go to the Emergency Department immediately.
Go to the Emergency Department Immediately if:

- 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.

Call your Home Care Nurse or Healthcare Provider if:

- You develop a fever (temperature higher than 38°C or 100.4°F)
- You have pain not relieved by pain medication.
- The amount of drainage from your chest tube increases.
- Your bandage becomes wet or loose.
- There is fluid coming from the drain site.
- The skin around your bandage is:
  - Red
  - Swollen (puffy)
  - Painful
  - Warm/hot to touch
- Call the Home Care Nurse or Treatment Centre Nurse if tube became disconnected and you were able to reconnect. A follow-up nursing visit will need to be arranged.

Contact Information

Home Care Nurse

- Call the Primary Health Care Intake and Administration line (306) 766-7251

Healthcare provider

_________________________________________ call _____________________________.

(Name of healthcare provider) (phone number)

For 24 hour professional health advice and information, call

HealthLine 811