

Your baby's chest drain

What is a chest drain?

A chest drain (also called an intercostal catheter or ICC) is a means of draining air or fluid from your baby's chest cavity. It is made of plastic tubing. One end is placed into your baby's chest and the other end to a one-way drain allowing air or fluid to be removed but not flow back in.

Why does my baby need a chest drain?

Your baby needs a chest drain when there is a collection of air (pneumothorax), blood (haemothorax), or fluid (chylothorax) that has leaked into the space surrounding the lung.

Draining air or fluid can help prevent the lung collapsing which would make it difficult for your baby to breathe.

A chest drain can also be placed during surgery to drain fluid after an operation.

A pneumothorax can occur spontaneously following birth or if your baby requires help with their breathing with ventilation or continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP).



How is the chest drain inserted?

Your baby will be given pain medicine before starting the procedure. Your baby will also be assessed to make sure their breathing is comfortable and their oxygen levels are adequate. Your baby will be carefully monitored during the procedure.

Once the ideal area to insert the drain has been identified, your baby's skin will be cleaned with antiseptic and a local anaesthetic injected into the skin to numb the area.

Inserting a chest drain is a sterile surgical procedure and sterile (blue) drapes will be placed over your baby to help the team maintain sterility.

A small skin cut is made and the plastic tube is guided into place to drain the air or fluid. The chest drain is attached to an appropriate drain system and secured with a dressing.

An x-ray may be needed to confirm correct position of the chest drain and to make sure it is working correctly.

Is it safe?

Yes, it is safe; however, like any procedure there are some risks. Your baby's safety is our priority and, if possible, the doctors will explain the benefits and risks of this procedure and ask for your consent prior to the procedure.

Risks

- Poor placement of the chest drain which means the position will need to be adjusted.
- Infection or bleeding at the site.
- A possibility of nerve damage to one of the nerves that helps the diaphragm muscle to contract resulting in problems with breathing (this is extremely rare).

Other considerations

- Your baby may require increased ventilation support during this time.
- The chest drain may cause pain; however, this is regularly assessed and managed before, during and after insertion.
- If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to talk to your doctor or nurse.

How long does the chest drain to stay in for?

The length of time the chest drain will need to stay in place depends on the reason it was needed. The nurses and doctors are skilled at observing your baby and the drain for signs that it may be removed.

Can I be present for the procedure?

Insertion of chest drain is a sterile procedure and unfortunately for this reason it is not possible for parents to be present. Once the procedure is complete you will be welcomed back in to the room to care for your baby.

Mater Misericordiae Ltd,

E info@mater.org.au

Mater acknowledges consumer consultation in the development of this patient information.
© 2020 Mater Misericordiae Ltd. ACN 096 708 922.

Document ID number: PI-CLN-430255 | Version number: 1 | Release date: 7 August 2020 | Date of last consumer review: 3 July 2020