

Leaving the hospital with a Heimlich valve

Why do I have a Heimlich valve?

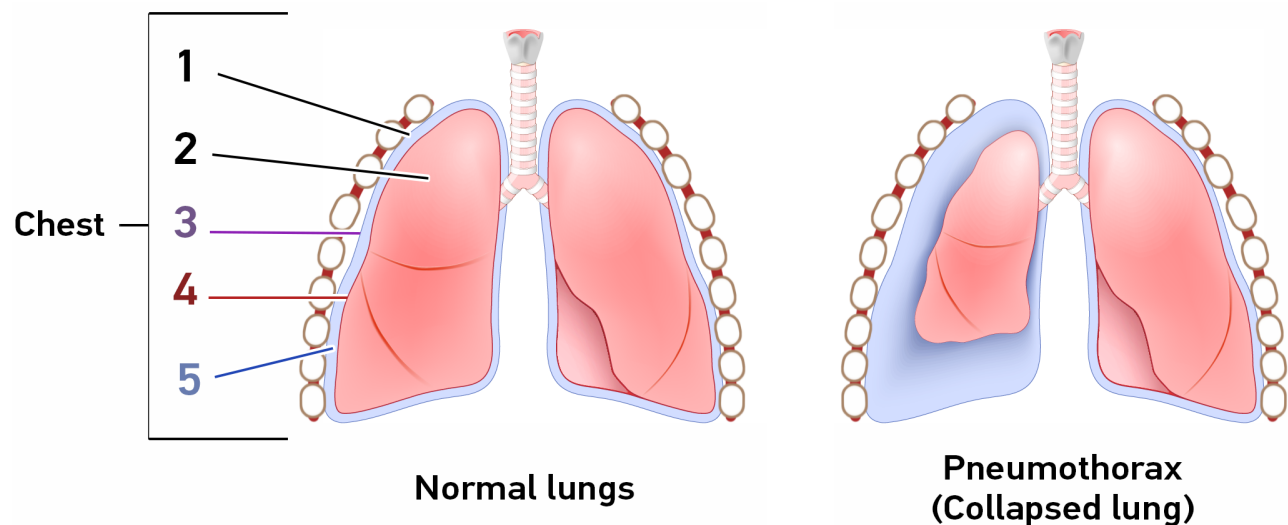
Lungs are covered by a thin layer of tissue called the pleura. The underside of the chest wall and ribs is also covered by pleura. The space between the two pleura is called the pleural space. The pleura slide against each other when you breathe.

When air or liquid gets in the space between the lung and the chest wall, called the pleural space, the lung collapses. It can become harder to breathe.

A collapsed lung can be caused by:

- No apparent reason, usually in young and healthy adults
- A lung disease
- An accident, for example a car accident or an injury
- An operation or a biopsy
- Smoking

In those cases, you might need a drain in the pleural space connected to a Heimlich valve.



1. Ribs
2. Lung
3. Pleura (outside layer)
4. Pleura (inside layer)
5. Space between pleura (Pleural space)

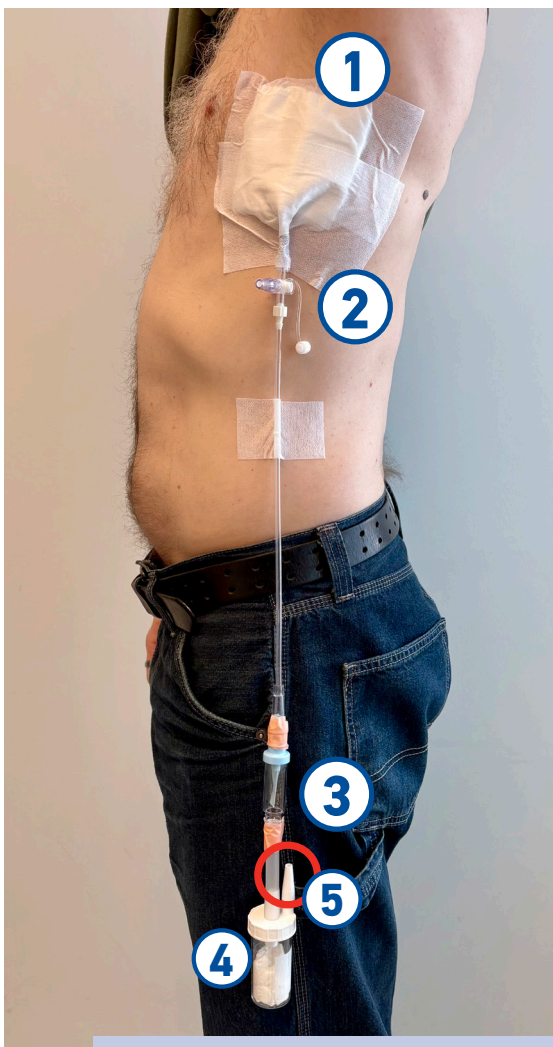
How does the Heimlich valve work?

The chest drain removes the air from the pleural space. This allows the lung to inflate again. The Heimlich valve is connected to the tip of the chest drain. This one-way valve lets air or fluid out, but prevents air from going inside the pleural space. A small container can be connected to the valve to collect fluid.

ATTENTION

When air passes through the valve, it can produce a flapping sound, or a “quacking duck sound”. It’s impressive, but **completely normal**.

When the pneumothorax heals, clear yellow fluid can start draining, this is normal.



How to care for your Heimlich valve?




- Empty the container often.
- Make sure that your chest drain, the valve and the container are never compressed or pulled.
- **NEVER** detach the valve from the drain. The blue tip of the valve should always be connected to your drain.
- Make sure that the **vent** on the container is **never blocked**.
- Place towels under the vent and the container when you sleep or when you lie down (in case of leakage).
- You can take a shower if you have a transparent dressing or by covering the regular dressing with a transparent dressing/ plastic wrap secured with adhesive tape. Avoid direct water on the dressing and the valve/container.
- No bathing or swimming.

Chest drain with Heimlich valve and container

1. Dressing
2. Chest drain
3. Heimlich valve
4. Container
5. Vent

How to change compresses in your container?

Compresses need to be changed every day, and when the container is half full of liquid.

1.	Wash your hands.	
2.	Unscrew the container from the cap.	
3.	Empty any excess liquid from the container in the toilet without rinsing it.	
4.	Remove the old compresses from the container and throw them out in the garbage. Wash your hands again.	
5.	Fold each compress in 4, that way it is easier to insert in the container.	
6.	Gently push the compress into the bottom of the container until the container is half full. The number of compresses needed depends on the size of the compresses.	
7.	Screw the container back on the cap.	
8.	Wash your hands again.	

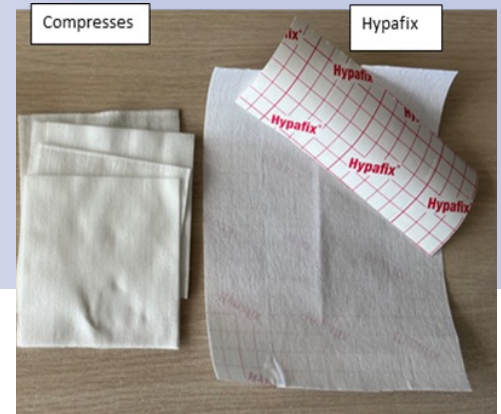
Speak to your nurse about the supplies.

What should I look out for?

- **The dressing on your chest is wet:**
 - Contact the nursing team at the CLSC.
- **If the valve disconnects from the chest drain:**
 1. Reconnect it immediately (blue tip connected to the drain).
 2. Tape it in place (Image on page 2).
 3. Go to the nearest emergency room as soon as possible.



- **If the entire drain comes out of your skin completely, leave it out and:**
 1. Take the compresses and Hypafix you've been given.
 2. Apply the compresses on the hole in your skin.
 3. Apply Hypafix over the compresses.
 4. Go to the nearest emergency room as soon as possible.



When to go to the emergency?

Go to the nearest emergency room or call 9-1-1 if you have:

- Suddenly a hard time breathing.
- Severe pain at the drain site that won't go away with pain medication.
- Fever higher than 38°C (100.4°F), taken by mouth.
- The drainage into the container suddenly changes color to: bright red, green, milky, pus or thick.
- Feeling that there's air and swelling under your skin. This can feel like:
 - Neck or chest pain
 - Hard time breathing or swallowing
 - Feeling of air under your skin and it gets bigger
 - Crackling noises when breathing