

Chest Tubes

Your baby has a chest tube to remove air or fluid from the chest cavity. The air either came from a small rupture in the lung tissue or from the chest being open for surgery. Fluid may be there from abnormal vessels in the baby (lymph vessels, causing chylothorax) or from a condition starting before birth, known as hydrops fetalis.

The chest tube is a small, soft, plastic tube connected to a collection chamber. The tube is inserted through the chest wall between the ribs into the chest cavity under sterile conditions. Your baby will receive a numbing medication and may receive a pain relieving medication prior to the insertion of the tube. The insertion site was sealed to prevent air from entering the chest cavity from the outside.

The collection chamber keeps constant negative pressure of the chest cavity. The suction from the collection chamber draws out the air and prevents reaccumulation in the chest cavity so the lung can expand and function properly.

Drainage from the chest tube may be a little bloody. This is from the trauma of inserting the chest tube or from surgery. There will be some drainage in the chest tube since there is normally fluid in a chest cavity in small amounts.

Chest tubes are removed when the air is no longer present in the chest cavity or when the drainage has stopped. When the tube is removed, a band-aid will be applied to the site.