

There are so many ways you can help us support cancer patients on their treatment journey, whether it's making a drain bag for a recovering breast cancer patient, or raising funds to enable us to send out more Cancer Kits. You may also know someone who would benefit from receiving their own Cancer Kit. For more information, please visit:

www.cancersupportuk.org/cancer-kits

Following a mastectomy, breast cancer patients have to carry drains for a short period to prevent or minimise bruising or swelling caused by fluid collecting in the wound cavity. Keen seamstress Susan Kirby, who designs drain bags out of pretty fabric remnants, has developed this guide to help you create one yourself. We'd love to see your designs, and to pass them on to breast cancer patients following their mastectomies. We are sure they'll be incredibly touched knowing a supporter made one especially for them!



How to make your own drain bag

Materials and equipment


We recommend using curtain fabric remnants, which are generally strong enough to hold the weight of a drain.


- Two squares of fabric, measuring 30cm x 30cm (for the bag) (see diagram 1)
- One long strip of fabric, measuring 125cm x 6cm (for the strap).
(Alternatively, use a length of lightweight cotton webbing.)
- Good quality sewing thread
- Needles
- Pins
- Sewing machine (it is also possible to sew the bag by hand, using backstitch or blind stitch)





Method

How to make the bag

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1. Create a flat hem at the top of each fabric square by folding down 2cm of the fabric, fasten with pins and sew in place.
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2. If the fabric you are using is likely to fray, you can run a zig zag stitch along the edges.
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3. Lay the two fabric squares with right sides facing each other and the hem at the top. Pin in place. Sew the three sides, which are not hemmed, about 1 cm in from the raw edges, to create the bag shape. Leaving the top hemmed edges as an opening.
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4. Turn the bag inside itself, so the correct side of the fabric is now showing and the sewn edges are hidden inside. You now have a bag which need a shoulder length strap.

How to make the strap

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1. To make a single strap for the bag, fold the 125cm long piece of fabric in half lengthways, with the right side of the fabric facing inwards.
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2. Sew along the long raw edge (approximately 0.5 cm in from the edge of the folded fabric) and leave both ends open. (see diagram 4)
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3. Turn the fabric right way out (so the right side of fabric is showing). This can sometimes be a little tricky – a long handled wooden spoon or cane can help roll the fabric back on itself. Alternatively, thread a piece of string (longer than the strap) through the inside of strap, securing it with a safety pin and then pull through from one end to the other.
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4. You now have a long tube, which should be about 2.5 to 3 cm wide and approximately 119 cm in length.

Final assembly

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1. Securely sew each end of the strap to the inside seams of your bag (so they cannot be seen). You can double stitch this, to ensure the strap is attached securely and can take the weight of a full drain.

You now have a complete bag!

Please return your completed bag to:
Sally Boughtflower, Cancer Support UK,
Citibase Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank,
London SW1P 4QP

**Thank you to our
volunteer Sue Kirby
for creating the
drain bag pattern/
instructions and
Cancer Support UK's
Sally Boughtflower
for facilitating the
drain bag project.**

