

Finding	Expected or Concerning?	Nursing Response
Tidaling in water-seal chamber	✓ Expected	Continue to monitor
Intermittent bubbling with coughing/exhalation	✓ May be expected	Monitor; air may be leaving pleural space
Continuous bubbling in water seal	⚠ Concerning	Suspect air leak ; assess patient and system
Tidaling suddenly stops	⚠ Assess	Check patient and tubing; lung may have re-expanded or tubing may be obstructed
Small amount of serosanguineous drainage	✓ Expected	Monitor amount and character
Sudden increase in bright red drainage	🚨 Concerning	Assess immediately and notify provider
Drainage system below chest level	✓ Correct	Keep system upright and below chest
Kinked/dependent tubing	⚠ Concerning	Correct tubing to promote drainage
Chest tube disconnects from drainage system	🚨 Emergency	Place tube end in sterile water temporarily until a new system can be connected, per protocol
Chest tube pulled from patient	🚨 Emergency	Cover site with a sterile occlusive dressing and obtain immediate assistance
Routine chest-tube clamping	✗ Avoid	Do not routinely clamp; trapped air can cause tension pneumothorax
Sudden dyspnea + decreased breath sounds	🚨 Emergency	Assess immediately; suspect pneumothorax/tension pneumothorax