



---

*Information for You from Your Health Care Team*

**Working Together to Prevent Surgical Site Infections**

One of the risks of having surgery is getting an infection at the site where the surgery is done. Most patients do not have an infection after surgery, but if they do, infections can be minor or serious. Germs that cause these infections may be harmless in their usual location, but if they enter an area where they are not usually found, an infection may occur. We will do everything possible to prevent infection, but we need your help.

**What are the risk factors for infection?**

Anyone can get an infection but the risk is more if you:

- Are an older adult.
- Are not well nourished.
- Have certain types of surgery, such as abdominal surgery.
- If you are overweight
- Have a weakened immune system.
- Smoke.
- Have a wound that is left open instead of closed with sutures.

**What are the some common symptoms of infection?**

- Redness, pain, swelling or drainage around the incision.
- Fever or chills.

**How are surgical site infections treated?**

- Most infections are treated with antibiotics.

**What are hospitals doing to prevent infection?**

- Your surgeon and operating room staff scrub their hands with antiseptic soap.
- The area where your incision is made is carefully cleaned.
- Members of the surgical team wear sterile clothing, and you are covered with sterile drapes.

**What can patients and families do to prevent infection?**

- Make sure health care workers wash their hands before touching you.
- If you have a dressing or bandage, let your nurse know if it is wet or loose.
- Have family and friends wash their hands before entering your room.
- When you go home, take care of your incision as instructed by your doctor or nurse.

All members of the healthcare team help to prevent infections. You can help prevent infections because you are a member of the team.

**Speak Up if You Have Questions**