

# How to Prevent a Surgical Site Infection

## Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of infections. This includes infections that can occur after surgery.

After surgery:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially before touching your dressing or incision.
- Try not to touch your incision.

## Fingernails

Fingernails are a perfect breeding ground for bacteria (germs). Bacteria under nails can cause infections in open wounds.

Before and after surgery:

- Do not wear artificial (fake) nails.
- Keep your nails short.
- Do not use nail polish or gel polish.
- Use a fingernail scrub brush to clean under your nails every day.

## Surgical Dressings

There are many types of surgical dressings. Some are waterproof and you may shower with them, others you cannot.

Make sure you understand the type of dressing you have and when it can be removed.

## Incision Care

- Avoid touching your incision.
- Do not use lotions, creams, ointments, gels or powders on your incision site.

- Do not soak your incision in water until your surgeon says it's OK.
- **Call your surgeon's office if you have any redness or drainage. Your surgeon will direct you on next steps.**

## Drains

You may have a drain after surgery. Follow the care instruction closely. Wash your hands well with soap and water before and after touching the drain.

## Shower Before Surgery

You may receive directions to take a shower with a cleaning agent or use bathing wipes the night before, the morning of your surgery or both.

- Follow the instructions carefully to make sure you are using the product correctly.
- Put clean sheets on your bed the night before your surgery.

## Pets at Home

Animals such as dogs and cats can be a comfort after surgery. The normal bacteria found on your pet can cause an infection in your incision site.

- Keep your pet away from your incision when holding it.
- Wash your hands well after petting or holding your pet.
- Do not let your pet lick your incision.

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