

Mercy Hospital

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Preventing Surgical Site Infections

Keep hands clean to prevent infection

- Wash hands before eating, after using the restroom, after sneezing or coughing and regularly during the day.
- Encourage family, visitors and all staff to wash their hands before entering and when leaving your room. If you do not see your providers clean their hands, please ask them to.
- Family and friends who visit you should not touch the surgical wound or dressings.
- Family and friends should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after visiting you. If you do not see them clean their hands, ask them to do so.

What do I need to do when I get home from the hospital?

- Before you go home, your doctor or nurse should explain everything you need to know about taking care of your wound. Make sure you understand how to care for your wound before you leave the hospital.
- Always clean your hands before and after caring for your wound.
- Make sure you know who to call if you have questions or problems.
- If you have any symptoms of an infection, such as redness and pain at the surgery site, drainage or fever, call your doctor immediately.



What you need to know about infections after surgery...

When you have surgery, your physician and staff protect your safety by following our surgery processes. They decrease the risk of infections by washing their hands prior to surgery, giving you antibiotics before the surgery and checking that equipment is cleaned as it should be.

We do all that we can to prevent infections. Most patients who have surgery do well, but sometimes patients get infections. Infections after surgery can sometimes lead to other problems, and may increase the length of the hospital stay.

Patients and their family members can help lower the risk of infection after surgery. Wash your hands and ask those assisting you to wash their hands too.

Smoking increases your risk of infections, as do poorly controlled blood sugars. Please check your diabetes (blood sugar) control with your doctor.

The day or night before surgery

- Take extra good care of your body.
- Do not shave near where you will have surgery. Shaving can irritate your skin which may lead to infection. If you shave your face every day, ask your surgeon if it is okay to do so.
- Keep warm. In cold weather, heat up the car before you get in. Keeping warm before surgery lowers your chance of getting an infection.
- If you have artificial nails, please have them removed.

At the time of surgery

- Bring a written medication list with you of all the medications you take.
- Let the physician know if you or family members have high blood sugar.
- Speak up if someone tries to shave you with a razor before surgery. Ask why you need to be shaved and talk with your surgeon if you have any concerns.
- Ask for blankets or other ways to stay warm while you wait for surgery.
- Ask your surgeon if you will be receiving antibiotics during your hospitalization.
- Your surgical site will be prepped with anti-bacterial solution immediately prior to the procedure.
- Meticulous sterile technique will be followed throughout the procedure.
- Antibiotics will be given immediately before time of incision when indicated.

Preparing your skin for surgery

Preparing the skin before surgery can reduce the risk of infection at the site. You should purchase a small bottle of Hibiclens™ or antibacterial Dial soap. The following steps outline the prepping process and should be carefully followed.

Step 1: Prepping your skin the night before surgery

- The night before surgery, shower or bathe.
- Start each shower or bath by washing your hair with shampoo. Rinse your hair and body thoroughly to remove the shampoo residue.
- Using half the bottle of Hibiclens™ (or antibacterial Dial soap) and a clean wash cloth, work up lather and scrub your body from the neck down. Avoid getting the solution in your eyes, ears or mouth. Thoroughly rinse all areas.



- Do not apply lotions, perfumes, deodorants, or nail polish.
- Dress in clean clothes or sleepwear.
- Avoid sweating after your shower.

Step 2: The morning of surgery

- Repeat the bathing steps listed above the morning of your surgery.
- Put on clean clothes and avoid sweating after your shower.
- Any hair at the surgical site will be clipped in the pre-op holding area before your surgery.
- Brush your teeth.
- Avoid drinking fluids, except for a sip of water to take medications. Also;
 - Stop water pills/diuretics.
 - Take blood pressure and heart medication with a small amount of water.
 - Hold diabetic medication and insulin. It will be given to you by the nursing staff if needed.
- Remove all jewelry, piercings, and contact lenses.