

# Surgical Site Infection

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***What is a Surgical Site Infection (SSI)?***

A surgical site infection is an illness that may happen to a person who has had an operation. The infection happens in the same area of the body where the surgery took place. Most patients do not get infections after surgery, but 3 out of every 100 people who have surgery get a surgical site infection.

### ***Before surgery, what can I do to protect myself from getting an infection?***

- Tell your doctor about health problems you may have, because that could affect your surgery
- Quit smoking. Patients who smoke get more infections. Talk to your doctor before your surgery about how to quit
- Do not shave on and near the part of your body where you will have surgery. Shaving with a razor can make your skin sore and red, and make it easier for you to get an infection

### ***At the time of your surgery and right afterward, there are many things that doctors and other healthcare staff will do to protect you from getting an infection:***

- If your doctor wants the hair at the surgical site removed before surgery, your hair will be clipped, instead of shaved with a razor
- Your doctor may have you take a medicine (called antibiotics) before your surgery
- Healthcare staff will clean their hands with either soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before touching you. Please tell your visitors to clean their hands in the same way when they come to visit you

### ***What do I need to do when I go home from the hospital?***

Before you leave the hospital, your doctor or nurse will tell you how to care for your wound and who to call if you have any problems. Additional things you can do:

- Always wash your hands before and after caring for your wound
- If you think you may have an infection, call your doctor right away. Signs of an infection are redness and pain near your wound, fluid coming from your wound, and fever

### ***Can a doctor help me if I get a SSI?***

Yes. Most surgical site infections can be treated with medicine. Your doctor will decide which medicine is best. Some patients may need another surgery to treat the infection.

*Adapted from information provided by: The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America, Infectious Diseases Society of America, American Hospital Association, Association for Professionals Infection Control and Epidemiology, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and The Joint Commission*

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