

Preventing Post-Op Infection

Clean Hands Save Lives- Especially around a new surgical incision!

- When & How to Wash
 - Before and after eating and preparing food
 - After using the restroom, sneezing, or blowing your nose
 - Before and after tending to someone who is sick or treating a cut or wound
 - After handling an animal or any animal waste
 - Scrub all surfaces for 20 seconds- if counting is boring, sing Happy Birthday twice. Dry with a paper towel or air dryer- if possible, don't touch any dirty faucets or door knobs once your hands are clean!
 - If soap and water aren't available, use hand sanitizing gel to clean your hands.
- Take Antibiotics as Prescribed.
 - If prescribed, antibiotics may be able to help prevent infection.
 - Follow prescription regimen religiously- take the full course!
 - Don't take antibiotics that are not prescribed for you.
- Keep Your Wound Clean and Dry
 - Follow your discharge instructions for aftercare, but generally keeping the incision clean and dry will help with healing.
- Stop Smoking Now
 - Smokers are more likely to have an infection after surgery than non-smokers
 - Smokers are also likely to scar worse and heal more slowly as nicotine interferes with the healing process- the slower an incision heals, the more likely an infection is to occur.
- Resist the Urge to Use Ointment
 - Follow aftercare instructions as provided to you by your healthcare provider.

- Many antibacterial ointments actually keep moisture around the incision which leaves you at risk for infections.

Signs and Symptoms of Infection

We hope for a speedy, uncomplicated recovery, but here are some signs and symptoms to look out for that may indicate infection. If you suspect that you have an infection, you should report it to your surgeon or come to the emergency room immediately.

- **Malaise.** Malaise, or a general feeling of being unwell or of lacking energy, is one of the most common symptoms of infection. It's normal to feel a little run down while recovering from surgery, but if you start to feel better then suddenly feel much worse, your body could be fighting an infection.
- **Fever.** A low-grade fever (under 100 degrees Fahrenheit) is common after surgery, but any temperature over 101 should be reported to your surgeon. Fever may be accompanied by decreased appetite, chills, and headache.
- **Swelling.** Inflammation caused by infection can cause warmth, redness, and hardness around the site of the incision. If you experience increased redness over time or redness accompanied by red streaks in the surrounding area, you should come in for evaluation.
- **Drainage.** Not all drainage is indicative of infection, but you should be especially cautious of any foul-smelling, pus-like fluid or anything green, or equally abnormal in color. Thick or chunky drainage is a rare, but possible sign of infection.
- **Pain.** Pain is normal after surgery. It should slowly and steadily diminish as you heal. If the surgical site pain increases suddenly for no apparent reason, an infection may be developing and you should seek medical attention.