

# Preventing surgical site infection: For children and youth

A **surgical site** is the place on your body where you will have surgery. Germs in this area can lead to **surgical site infection**. Together, you and your healthcare team can reduce the risk of infection.

## 01. The night before your surgery, or morning of surgery



**You must shower or bathe.** Your whole body must be as clean as possible. Use antimicrobial soap or regular soap.

- **How this helps:** Germs on skin can cause infection after surgery. A whole-body shower or bath removes some of these germs. This lowers the risk of infection after surgery.



**Do not shave the surgical site.**

- **How this helps:** Shaving before surgery can double the risk of infection. Shaving can cause small cuts and scrapes on the skin where germs can enter and multiply.
- If the surgeon needs to remove any hair, they will do this as close to your surgery time as possible. The surgeon will use clippers (what we use to buzz hair on the head). Clippers are less likely to cut and scrape your skin.

## 02. The morning of surgery at home, or in hospital



**Use chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG 2%) wipes** if your healthcare team provided them.

- **How this helps:** Healthcare teams recommend CHG 2% wipes before some surgeries. These wipes target many different germs. They decrease the number of germs on the skin for up to 6 hours.

## 03. The morning of surgery, in hospital



**Keep warm.** If you feel cold before or after surgery, please ask your healthcare team for warm blankets. You can also ask your healthcare team how they will keep you warm during surgery.

- **How this helps:** Low body temperature can cause blood vessels to narrow. This weakens the body's response to germs. Keeping your body temperature between 36°C - 36.5 °C can prevent infections.
- **Your healthcare team will:**
  - Give you warm blankets before and after surgery,
  - Answer your questions about staying warm before, during, and after surgery, and
  - Tell you if they will use a forced air warming blanket, called a Bair Hugger, to keep you warm 30-60 minutes before surgery.

## 04. After surgery, in hospital and at home



**Keep hands, wound, and dressing clean.** To practice proper hand hygiene, clean your hands well, at the right times. Use alcohol-based hand rub, or soap and water:

- Before touching your wound or dressing;
- After visiting the toilet or urinal;
- Before touching your IV line, drainage bag, or tube; and
- After touching your IV line, drainage bag, or tube.



Visitors must not touch your wound or dressing.



Talk to your healthcare team about hand hygiene. You are always welcome to ask any healthcare team member if we have cleaned our hands.

Get help if you notice any redness, fever, pain, or swelling. If you are at home, use the contact information on your discharge sheet.

- **How this helps:** Safe care starts with clean hands.
  - Up to 70% of all healthcare-associated infections are passed on by healthcare team member hands. The most effective way to prevent infections in hospital is for healthcare team to practice good hand hygiene.
  - Your hands matter, too. When patients, families, and visitors practice proper hand hygiene, infection rates can fall by over 50%.
- **Your healthcare team will:**
  - Talk with you about hand hygiene;
  - Answer your questions about preventing infection;
  - Teach you how to care for your surgical site; and
  - Give you a discharge sheet that explains how you can recover at home.