

Preventing surgical site infection: For parents and caregivers

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

01. The night before your child's surgery, or morning of surgery



Your child must shower or bathe. Their 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 child's 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 the 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 your child warm. If your child feels cold before or after surgery, please ask your healthcare team for warm blankets. You can also ask your healthcare team how they will keep your child 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 child's body temperature between 36°C - 36.5°C can prevent infections.
- **Your healthcare team will:**
 - Give your child 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 your child 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 child's wound or dressing;
- After visiting the toilet or urinal;
- Before touching your child's IV line, drainage bag, or tube; and
- After touching your child's IV line, drainage bag, or tube.



Visitors must not touch your child's wound or dressing.



Talk to your healthcare team about hand hygiene. You are 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 child's surgical site; and
 - Give you a discharge sheet that explains how you can care for your child at home.