

Surgical Site Infection

A surgical site infection occurs after surgery in the part of the body where surgery took place. Most patients who have surgery do not develop an infection. However, in a small number of patients, infections do develop.

Surgical site infections typically develop within 30 days after surgery and can range from superficial to deep organ infections.

- A superficial incisional infection is an infection that occurs just in the area of the skin where the incision was made.
- Deep incisional infection occurs beneath the incision area and includes the muscles and tissues.

Most surgical site infections can be treated successfully with antibiotics. In some cases, additional surgery may be necessary to treat or remove the infection.

Some individuals are at higher risk of infection than others. Some of these risk factors include:

- Surgery lasting more than two (2) hours
- Age – Older patients have a higher risk of infection
- Obesity
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Weakened Immune system
- Other medical conditions or diseases



Surgical site infections can be prevented. The Surgery Center and your entire care team take actions to prevent infections. These actions can include:

- Washing their hands before and after caring for a patient.
- Cleaning their hands and arms with a special antiseptic soap prior to surgery.
- Wearing special hair covers, masks, gowns and gloves during surgery.

- Cleaning the surgical area with a special soap that kills germs.
- Administering an antibiotic before surgery to prevent infection.

You can also help prevent surgical site infections by doing the following:

- If you smoke, QUIT. People who smoke get more infections.
- Let your surgeon know if you are ill or running a fever before coming to the surgery center.
- Do not shave the surgical area before surgery. Shaving causes small penetrations in the skin that can allow germs to enter. Your care team will use a clipper to remove any necessary hair prior to surgery.
- Wash your hands before and after touching or removing your dressing.
- Do not touch the surgical incision.
- Do not allow family or friends to touch the surgical dressing or incision.

Know the signs and symptoms of a surgical site infection.

- Redness and pain at the surgical area
- Tenderness, warmth or swelling in the area
- Delayed healing or open areas of the incision
- Cloudy drainage or pus coming from the incision
- Fever of 101 degrees or greater for more than 24 hours



If you experience any of these signs or symptoms, call your surgeon immediately.