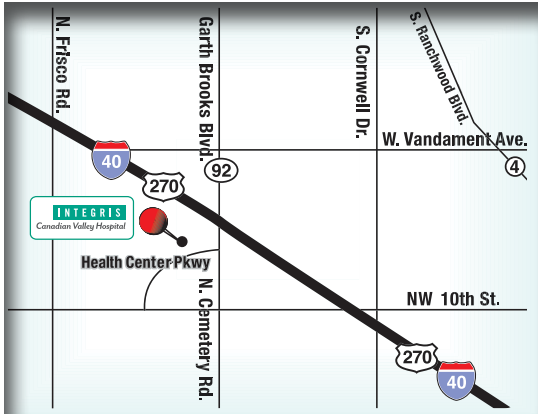


Surgical Site Infection Prevention



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What is a surgical site infection?

A surgical site infection is an infection that occurs after surgery in the part of the body where the surgery took place. Most patients who have surgery do not develop an infection. However, SSIs develop in about one to three of every 100 patients who have surgery.

Some of the common symptoms of SSI include the following.

- Redness, swelling and pain around the area where you had surgery
- Drainage of cloudy fluid from your surgical wound
- Separation and bleeding of a previously sealed surgical site
- Fever

If you notice any of the signs listed above, or anything else out of the ordinary, contact your doctor immediately.

How you can help avoid acquiring an SSI

Hospitals and other health care facilities have developed extensive infection prevention and control programs to prevent SSIs. However, medical experts also recommend some things you, as a patient, can do to help prevent an SSI.

- Quit smoking. Patients who smoke get more infections. Talk to your doctor about how you can quit before your surgery.
- Eat a good diet, avoid alcohol, and get plenty of rest before and after surgery.
- Tell your doctor about other medical problems you may have. Health problems such as allergies, diabetes and obesity could affect your surgery and your treatment.
- If you have diabetes, tell your surgeon and work with your health care providers to keep your blood sugar under control.

- If instructed, shower or bathe with antibacterial soap two days before surgery, the day before surgery, and again the morning of your surgery and be sure to thoroughly clean the location of the surgery site.
- Do not shave near where you will have surgery. Shaving with a razor can irritate your skin and make it easier to develop an infection.
- Observe the hand washing and glove use of the health care professionals taking care of you. Don't be afraid to ask them to wash their hands again or to get a new pair of gloves.
- Ask if you will get antibiotics before surgery.

When you return home, you are responsible for taking care of yourself and your surgical site.

- Follow your surgeon's instructions about exposing the incision to water.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before touching your incision.
- Continue to follow the SSI prevention instructions discussed earlier (don't smoke, eat a good diet, avoid alcohol, get plenty of rest, etc.).
- Family and friends who visit you should not touch the surgical wound or dressing.
- Family and friends should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after visiting you. If you do not see them clean their hands, ask them to clean their hands.

