

Patient Education Sheet

What is a Surgical Site Infection?

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A surgical site infection occurs after surgery in the part of the body where surgery took place. Patients usually do not develop surgical site infections. About 1 to 3 out of 100 patients who have surgery develop them.

What are the symptoms of a surgical site infection?

Common symptoms of a surgical site infection include the following:

- Fever
- Redness, pain, and/or swelling in the area where the surgery was performed
- Drainage from the surgical wound (incision) that is usually cloudy or looks like pus, and may have an odor
- Very warm or hot temperature of the skin at or around the incision.

How are surgical site infections treated?

Most surgical site infections can be treated with antibiotics. Your surgeon may order a wound culture to determine the type of bacteria causing the infection in order to choose the correct antibiotic for treatment. Sometimes patients may require another surgery to treat the infection.



What is Danbury Hospital doing to prevent surgical site infections?

To prevent surgical site infections, the surgeons and nurses at Danbury Hospital do the following:

- ✓ Clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based gel before and after caring for each patient
- ✓ Clean their hands and arms up to their elbows with an antiseptic cleaner before performing your surgery
- ✓ Wear special hair covers, masks, gowns, and gloves during surgery to keep your surgical area clean
- ✓ Depending on your surgery, your surgeon may order antibiotics to be given to you before surgery starts

- ✓ Clean your skin at the surgical site with a special antiseptic that kills germs before starting the surgery.

How can I help to prevent surgical site infections after my surgery?

If you do not see your surgeon, nurse, or any other healthcare provider wash his/her hands before caring for you or your incision, please ask them to do so.

- Do not touch your incision unless you are being taught how to care for it – And if you do need to touch the surgical area, it is important to wash your hands before and after touching it.
- Do not allow family and friends who come to visit you touch the surgical area or dressings.
- Ask your family and friends to also wash their hands before and after visiting you.
- If friends or family members are ill, ask them not to come visit you until they are free from illness to prevent spreading germs to you.

Are there any special instructions for when I go home?

Your surgeon and nurse will explain to you how to care for your incision before you go home. If you have additional questions or do not understand the instructions, please ask for additional help. Important tips to remember include:

- ✓ Always wash your hands before and after caring for your surgical area and dressings.
- ✓ If you have a family member or friend helping with your wound care, make sure he/she also washes his/her hands before and after your care.
- ✓ Clarify with your surgeon whether or not you can take a shower or tub bath before doing so.
- ✓ Be sure to schedule your follow up post-operative appointment with your surgeon.
- ✓ Call your surgeon if you experience any of the symptoms of a surgical site infection as described on the front of this fact sheet.

Source:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America

Rev 2/2013