

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. Surgical site infections can sometimes be superficial infections involving the skin only. Other surgical site infections are more serious and can involve tissues under the skin, organs, or implanted material.

Surgical site infection is a complication of care that hospitals are trying hard to prevent. Some of the things hospitals and healthcare workers do to prevent surgical site infections include:

- Scrubbing of the hands and arms up to the elbows with an antiseptic agent just before surgery
- Handwashing with soap and water or an alcohol based hand rub before and after caring for each patient
- Removing hair immediately before surgery using electric clippers if hair is in the same area where the surgical procedure is planned
- Giving preventive antibiotics within 60 minutes of the planned surgery start time and stopping antibiotics within 24 hours of the surgery end
- Cleaning the skin at the site of surgery with a special soap that kills germs

These are just a few of the strategies that Cleveland Clinic Union Hospital has in place to prevent surgical site infection.

Patients can help prevent surgical site infection as well.

Before Surgery:

- Tell your doctor about other medical problems and allergies that you have
- Quit smoking – patients who smoke get more surgical site infections
- Do not shave near where you will have surgery (razors irritate the skin and make it easier to get an infection)
- Follow instructions provided by your doctor and hospital nurses during the pre-operative phone call

After Surgery:

- Ask doctors and staff taking care of you if they have washed their hands or used an alcohol based hand rub before examining you or providing care
- Do not allow family or friends touch the surgical wound or dressings
- Make sure you understand how to take care of your surgical wound before you leave the hospital – ask questions
- Always clean your hands before touching the surgical dressing or wound
- Keep your follow up appointment(s) with your surgeon
- If you have any symptom of an infection such as redness and pain at the surgical site, drainage or fever call your doctor immediately

Hospitals in the United States are required to report the rate of Surgical Site Infection for Colon Surgeries and Abdominal Hysterectomy. Cleveland Clinic Union Hospital’s performance is compared with those in the state of Ohio and in the nation in the graphs below.

