

Prevention and Treatment of Infections after an Operation

This leaflet provides information for patients who have had a surgical procedure at Aintree on the identification and treatment of possible surgical wound infections.

How do I look after my wound?

- After your operation, the wound will be covered with a dressing.
- Before you leave the ward the staff will tell you what will happen; sometimes a district nurse will be arranged to come and change the dressing, sometimes arrangements will be made to do this in a clinic at the hospital.

Occasionally patients are shown how to change their own dressing, and if they are perfectly happy to do this will be given the supplies they need to take home.

- If you have any stitches or clips that need to be removed you will be told before you leave the hospital where and when they will be taken out.
- Most wounds heal best if they are not disturbed, so do not remove the dressing yourself unless you are told to do so. Do not get the dressing wet.

How will I know if I have an infection?

Occasionally infections do occur. All operations are carried out in clean operating theatres with sterile instruments and we try hard to make sure this does not happen.

Signs of an infection are:

- Pain that is getting worse
- Redness which is spreading out from the wound
- Increased swelling of the wound
- The area around the wound feels hot
- Discharge from the wound (leaking fluid or pus)
- There may be an unpleasant smell from the wound
- Other signs may be that you develop a temperature, or feel shivery and unwell.

What should I do if I am worried?

If you are worried you need to get medical advice. This could be from a district nurse, from your own doctor, or you could telephone the hospital for advice.

You can either telephone the ward you were on, or ask to speak to the secretary of the surgeon that did your operation.

Sometimes surgeons will have special arrangements or a specialist nurse to phone if you are worried.

The staff on the ward will be able to give you specific advice before you go home as to who you should ask for help if you are worried you may have developed an infection.

It is very important if you are concerned to get advice promptly. In an emergency you can attend the Accident and Emergency department for help. Usually the sooner you can get advice the easier it is to sort an infection out.

The nurse or doctor will need to look at your wound and they will decide if it is infected.

Often a swab is taken to try and see what type of infection it may be.

If they think it is infected you may be given a course of antibiotic tablets. If it is more serious you may need to come back into hospital for antibiotics to be given through a drip into your veins, and sometimes the wound has to be cleaned by taking you back to theatre for another operation.

If this is the case the doctor will discuss it with you fully.

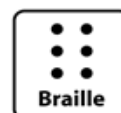
Joint Replacements Operations

If you have had a new joint, such as a knee or a hip, then special arrangements apply.

- If anyone thinks your joint is infected, it is very important to see the specialist nurse at the hospital **before you take any antibiotics** - even if your district nurse or your GP (or anyone else) thinks you should have some.
- You will have been given a telephone number for this nurse before your operation. If you are worried and it is out of hours (after 5pm and before 9am) you should come to the Accident and Emergency department.
- You will need to be seen by the orthopaedic doctor on call who will telephone your consultant for advice.
- Antibiotics for a suspected joint infection must only be given on the advice of the consultant who operated on you or another consultant who does the same operation you have had because we need to do special tests first to be able to treat you properly.

For more information on surgical site infections, see the Health Protection Agency website.

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/SurgicalSiteInfectionSurveillanceService/GeneralInformation/>



If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, on audio tape or disk and in other languages on request. Please contact:

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