



Developing Medicine's digital medical resource scripts and sources – Surgical care

How to reduce the risk of surgical wound infection

If you are having surgery it is important that you do everything you can to make sure that the site of the operation does not become infected. Before the procedure, wash yourself and the area well with soap and water. If you shave that area, we do not recommend that you shave for at least a week. The area will instead be shaved under sterile conditions in the operating theatre. If you are diabetic, make sure that your blood sugar levels are well controlled before the operation.

After the procedure, you should ask the doctors or the nurses how the incision site was closed. The surgeons may have used a dissolving suture, a non-dissolving suture or staples. Non-dissolving sutures and staples need to be taken out, which is normally done 7 to 10 after the operation. During that time, it is important that you keep the area clean and dry. Do not soak the wound, but clean it gently. We do not advise you to use any powders, creams or lotions on the wound unless you have been told to do so by a healthcare professional.

It is normal to have some discomfort and redness around the wound, but you should check for any signs of infection, which may show 2-3 days after the operation. The signs include

redness around the area or pus. The wound may also be opening or may be leaking smelly fluid. You may also start to feel feverish. If any of these things happen, you need to contact the hospital or clinic as soon as possible. People who are diabetic are at higher risk of surgical wound infections and so especially should be looking out for these signs.

Sources: [NHS, Guy's & St Thomas' Hospital Foundation Trust, Surgical wounds and preventing infections](#), [NHS, Oxford University Hospitals, Caring for Surgical Wounds at Home](#), [WHO, Surgical site infection](#)