

You may have a wound infection if you have one of the following 5 features:

- The skin around your wound gets more red and sore, rather than less, after the operation.
- It may be hot and swollen.
- The wound may start to discharge pus, which is often a green or yellow fluid.
- The dressings on the wound or the discharge from the wound may have a bad, offensive smell.
- You may start to feel generally unwell or shivering, or have a raised temperature eg 37.8C or more.

If you are concerned that you have developed a wound infection then you should contact the Surgical Team directly.

If your wound is reviewed after discharge by the Community Teams or GP and they suspect an infection, then please ask them to contact the surgical team.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DEVELOP SYMPTOMS?

If a surgical wound infection is suspected a sample from the surface of your wound may be taken with a swab and send it to the laboratory for tests.

If an infection is confirmed you may be prescribed antibiotics for it. Very occasionally we will want to open the wound to allow the infection to drain. Sometimes this is done in a clinic or on a ward.

In rare situations you will require further surgery to treat the infection. If your original surgery involved using implants these may need to be removed or replaced in order to control and treat your infection.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM CONCERNED THAT I HAVE A WOUND INFECTION?

In Hospital

If a wound infection develops during your admission the surgical team will start any appropriate treatment.

At Home

If you are concerned that you have developed a wound infection after discharge from hospital then please contact your Surgical Team directly.

If after discharge from the hospital your wound is reviewed by the Community Teams or GP, and they suspect an infection, please ask them to contact your surgical team for advice.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR SURGICAL TEAM



If you require the leaflet in large print, another language, an audio tape or braille, Please contact:
Patient and Customer Services
Tel: 0161 419 5678 Email: PCS@stockport.nhs.uk

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WOUND INFECTIONS AFTER SURGERY

POST OPERATIVE

Patient Information Leaflet

HOW TO LOOK OUT FOR A WOUND INFECTION AFTER YOUR OPERATION.

This information is intended as a quick guide. More information can be found in the Guideline on the Prevention and Treatment of Surgical Site Infection published by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence.

This can be found online at:

www.nice.org.uk/ng125/informationforpublic

WHAT ARE SURGICAL WOUND INFECTIONS?

Many tiny organisms, including bacteria and viruses, live on our skin, in our bodies and all around us without causing us any harm. The skin usually acts as a barrier that prevents the germs from getting in. When you have surgery, some of these organisms can get into the cut made by the surgeon and cause an infection. This is called a surgical site infection (or a surgical wound infection). The risk of developing a wound infection is different for different operations.

Most surgical site infections are not serious, but some can be more serious if they affect the deeper tissues under the skin. Having a surgical site infection can mean a longer stay in hospital to recover, but there are things that can be done before, during and after your surgery that can help to avoid infection.

REDUCING THE RISK OF SURGICAL WOUND INFECTION

For planned surgery, you will have a pre-operative assessment. This will identify some factors which might increase the risk of infection of a surgical wound. This process includes assessing diabetic control in diabetics and screening patients to see if they are carrying MRSA.

It might be that something is identified which can be improved to reduce the risk of infection and this may delay planned surgery to give time for this to be done (for example improving poor diabetic control).

Things YOU can do before that reduce the risk of wound infection:

- Stopping smoking
- Taking care not to get any wounds or grazes around the area of the planned operation.
- Having a shower or bath the day on the day of the operation or the day before is advisable.
- If there is hair at the operation site and it needs to be removed, this will be removed by the theatre team before the operation – please do not do this before the operation yourself.
- Staying warm before the operation is important and this can be helped by bringing a heavy dressing gown in to wear before your operation.

During the operation many things are done by the theatre team to reduce the risk of infection. This includes using antiseptic liquid on the skin and sometimes giving antibiotics. A dressing is usually put onto the wound at the end of the operation. This should be left in place. If you go home with a dressing on you will be given advice by the ward staff about what to do with it.

HOW LONG AFTER SURGERY CAN WOUND INFECTIONS DEVELOP?

A surgical wound infection might develop any time from two to three days after surgery until the wound has healed. Although it may not show up until 30 days after the operation.

Very occasionally an infection can happen several months after an operation.

Surgical wound infections are uncommon. Most surgical wound infections are limited to the skin, but can occasionally spread to deeper tissues. Infections are more likely to occur after surgery on parts of the body that harbour lots of germs, such as the gut.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE AN INFECTION?

If you need to stay in hospital then the nurses and doctors will monitor you for signs of infection. They will also examine the wound during dressing changes for example.

Please,

- DO NOT remove your dressings unless you have received specific advice from your healthcare team to do so.
- DO NOT touch the wound or the wound drain (if you have one). You could accidentally transfer germs from your fingers to your wound causing an infection.

Some patients may have special dressings that need to be left in place for a certain length of time. You will be advised if you have this type of special of dressing.

Once you have left the hospital then there are some things you can look out for.

It is normal for wounds to look a little red at the edges when they are new. This is to be expected.