Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Preventing a Surgical Site Infection v2

Version number: **2**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

Preventing a Surgical Site Infection

Patient Information

Surgical Services

- Author ID: YD
- Leaflet ref: Surg 063
- Version: 2
- Leaflet title: Preventing a Surgical Site Infection

- Last review: December 2022

- Expiry Date: December 2024

What are surgical wound infections?

Most surgical wounds heal rapidly without complications. A minority of wounds are complicated by infection. This occurs when germs (micro-organisms such as bacteria) enter the incision (cut) that the surgeon makes through your skin in order to carry out the operation.

When do these infections develop?

A surgical wound infection can develop at any time from 2 to 3 days after surgery until the wound has healed (usually two to three weeks after the operation). Very occasionally, an infection can occur several months after an operation.

How will my wound be monitored?

During your stay in hospital, the nurse who changes your wound dressing will check for signs of infection. If you are concerned about your wound, tell the nurse who is looking after you. Don’t be tempted to remove your dressing, or touch your wound or drain. You could accidentally transfer germs from your fingers to your wound.

igns and symptoms of a wound infection

Infection can develop after you leave hospital. The wound may have some redness and swelling or a bit of blood drainage which is expected after surgery. This should become less each day.

However you may have an infection if you develop one or more of the following symptoms:

- The skin around your wound gets red and sore and you do not think that it is part of the normal wound healing process, or it becomes hot, tender or swollen.

- The wound starts to open up.
- Your wound has green or yellow coloured discharge (pus).
- You feel generally unwell or feverish, or you have a temperature.

What happens if I develop symptoms

If the nurse or doctor suspects that you may have a surgical wound infection, they may take a sample from the surface of the wound with a swab. This is sent to the laboratory for testing. The doctor or nurse may prescribe treatment with antibiotics, depending on the results.

Wound Care Post-operatively

After discharge from hospital, it is important that your surgical wound is kept clean and dry. This helps you to heal faster preventing infection. Try to leave your wound dressing on for at least 48 hours after your operation, but longer if possible and do not touch your wound. You may shower safely 48 hours after surgery.

If your dressing becomes loose or wet, remove it. Pat your wound dry with a clean dry towel and place a clean dressing over it.

Contact your GP; District nurse or Langtree Ward if you have wound problems.

For Wound care advice over the phone ring Langtree Ward, Wigan Infirmary,

Telephone: 01942 822514 or 01942 822513

References

Further information regarding surgical site infection is available via NICE website:

- NICE, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. ‘Surgical Site Infections: prevention and treatment’. Published: 11th April 2019

  https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng125

- PHE, Public Health of England. ‘Monitoring Surgical wounds for infection. Information for patients’ Published July 2013, last updated 23 August 2018.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/monitoring-surgical-wounds-for-infection-information-for-patients



Version number: **2**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

All rights reserved © 2026
WWL Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust