

### After your operation:

- clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
- if you're worried a doctor, nurse or other health care worker may have forgotten to clean their hands, it's OK for you or your family/whānau to remind them.

### What do I and my family/whānau need to do before I go home from hospital?

- Ask your doctor or nurse to explain everything you need to know about taking care of your wound.
- Before you go home, make sure you have the name and contact details of the health provider or hospital to call if you develop signs or symptoms of an infection.

**Name of health provider/hospital:**

**Contact number:**

- Always clean your hands before and after caring for your wound.



[www.open.hqsc.govt.nz/infections](http://www.open.hqsc.govt.nz/infections)

**SSII**



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# Preventing infection after surgery



**FOR PATIENTS**

## What is a surgical site infection?

A surgical site infection (SSI) is the infection of the surgical wound when a patient has had surgery. Some SSIs only involve the skin but others are more serious and can involve the tissues under the skin, organs or implanted material such as joint replacements.

Most patients who have an operation do not develop an infection. If infections do develop, however, they can make recovery from your operation more difficult because they cause additional illness and stress.

## What are the symptoms of an SSI?

Some of the common symptoms of an SSI are:

- redness and pain around the area where you had surgery
- drainage of cloudy fluid from your surgical wound
- fever (feeling hot and/or cold and unwell).

## Can SSIs be treated?

Yes. Most SSIs can be treated with antibiotics. Sometimes patients with SSIs also need more surgery to treat the infection.

## What are hospitals doing to prevent SSIs?

To prevent SSIs, doctors, nurses and other health care staff:

- clean their hands and arms up to their elbows with an antiseptic just before the operation
- wear hair covers, masks, gowns and gloves during the operation to keep the surgery area clean
- remove your hair around the operation site using electric clippers – not a razor, which could irritate the skin and make it easier to develop an infection
- give you antibiotics before your surgery starts
- clean the skin at the operation site with an antiseptic that kills bacteria (germs)
- clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after caring for you and other patients.



## What can you and your family/whānau do to help prevent SSIs?

Before your operation:

- tell your doctor about other health problems you might have, such as diabetes – these could affect your surgery and your treatment
- If you smoke, talk to your doctor or ask to be referred to your local smoking cessation programme for support to stop smoking before your surgery – patients who smoke get more infections
- don't shave where you will have surgery.

## At the time of your operation:

- speak up if someone tries to shave you with a razor before surgery. Ask why you need to be shaved rather than clipped
- ask if you will get antibiotics before surgery.