

## How can I help to prevent a surgical site infection?

### After your surgery

- ✓ Wash your hands before and after touching your wound
- ✓ Hospital staff should either wash their hands or apply hand gel before touching you or your wound
- ✓ Family or friends must not touch your wound or your dressing
- ✓ Your visitors must wash their hands or apply hand gel before and after visiting you.
- ✓ When you go home, ask your midwife/nurse or doctor to explain everything you need to know about taking care of your wound or who to contact if there is a problem.



## Signs of infection

Some common symptoms of surgical site infection are:

- fever
- redness, swelling and pain around the surgical site
- increased drainage or pus from the incision site

If you notice any of these signs, please contact your medical team, the KEMH Emergency Centre or your GP, as advised by your surgical team. Most surgical site infections can be effectively treated with antibiotics.

**KEMH Emergency Centre:** (08) 9340 1431

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Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of Health  
Women and Newborn Health Service

# Preventing Healthcare Associated Infections



 **HealthyWA**  
[healthywa.wa.gov.au](http://healthywa.wa.gov.au)

WNHS  
**Community**  
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## What is a healthcare associated infection (HAI)?

A healthcare associated infection is an infection which occurs while receiving health care or treatment at hospital or home; for example surgical site infection, bloodstream infection related to an intravenous device or urinary tract infection related to a catheter. These types of infections are often preventable.

## What is King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEMH) doing to prevent health care associated infections?

KEMH has a specially appointed Infection Prevention and Control team who follow 'best practice' measures to prevent HAIs, such as:

- ✓ monitoring infection rates such as infection from surgery, bloodstream and bacterial infections
- ✓ maintaining a clean hospital environment
- ✓ maintaining quality food standards
- ✓ promoting hand hygiene among staff, patients and visitors
- ✓ hand hygiene auditing and reporting (published on 'My Hospitals' website and throughout KEMH)
- ✓ providing antibiotics at the time of surgery
- ✓ conducting aseptic (germ-free) technique education, training and procedure auditing
- ✓ using properly sterilised equipment
- ✓ isolating patients with infectious illness
- ✓ ensuring healthcare staff wear protective clothing such as gowns, gloves and masks.

## Who is the Infection Prevention and Control team?

The Infection Prevention and Control team include a group of expert Clinical Nurse Consultants and Clinical Microbiologists who help protect patients from HAIs. Their number one priority is your safety. Infection Prevention and Control work with your healthcare team and use proven methods to ensure you stay safe from HAIs during your stay. They strive to keep the Hospital community safe from infection.

## How can I protect myself or my baby from getting a HAI?

- ✓ If you have not seen a healthcare worker who is caring for you wash their hands or use alcohol hand rub, ask them to do so.
- ✓ If you have a catheter in your bladder or drip in your vein, ask each day when it can be removed. Tell your doctor, nurse or midwife if it becomes painful or loose.
- ✓ If your room or the equipment in your room looks dirty, ask to have it cleaned.
- ✓ Wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand rub (provided in your room and around the hospital) regularly.

## What can your visitors do to protect you or your baby?

- ✓ Ask your visitors to wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand rub when they arrive and when they leave.
- ✓ If your visitors are unwell or have a cold or have diarrhoea or vomiting they must not come until they are better.
- ✓ Visitors must not touch drips, drains, dressings or other equipment around the bed

## How can I help to prevent a surgical site infection?

A surgical site infection (SSI) can be a healthcare associated infection. An SSI is an infection at the site of a surgical operation that is caused by the operation usually within 30 days of the procedure.

### Prior to your surgery

- ✓ If you smoke – stop smoking, at least until you have recovered from your surgery.
- ✓ If you are diabetic, keep your blood sugar levels under control.
- ✓ Tell your doctor, nurse or midwife if you have any other medical problems including allergies, or have ever had a multi resistant organism.
- ✓ Let your doctor, nurse or midwife if you have been hospitalised outside of Western Australia and where, within the last 12 months.
- ✓ Avoid alcohol and get plenty of rest before and after surgery.
- ✓ Obesity increases the risk of infection, careful weight management and a healthy diet can help.
- ✓ Report any infection you have to your doctor, nurse or midwife.
- ✓ If you have elective surgery shower with soap the morning of your surgery
- ✓ You may also be offered a chlorhexidene body wash on your presentation to hospital prior to surgery.
- ✓ Do not shave, wax or use hair removal cream near surgery site. Your nurse or midwife will clip with special clippers, if required.
- ✓ If you have not seen a healthcare worker who is caring for you wash their hands or use alcohol hand rub, ask them to do so.