How to Avoid Surgical Infections

Pre-operatively:

Smoking Cessation – If you smoke, you are at a much higher risk for wound healing problems and surgical site infections. You should strongly consider stopping or at least cutting down on the amount that you smoke leading up to your surgery and during the recovery period.

Skin bacteria can contribute to surgical site infections. On the evening before your surgery and on the morning of your surgery you should shower with Hibiclens and antibacterial soap.

You should not shave the hair around your surgical site with a razor – this can lead to an increased risk of infection. You will undergo appropriate hair removal in the pre-op area with a clipper.

You will receive instructions from your surgeon if you should take any oral antibiotics before surgery. Please be clear with your surgeon if you are taking any other antibiotics.

In the Hospital:

To avoid surgical infections and to improve healing your tissues will need a good supply of oxygen. You will be given an *Incentive Spirometer*, a plastic device that encourages you to take deep breaths. This not only helps to avoid hospital-acquired pneumonia, but also improves your tissue oxygenation. Please use your *Incentive Spirometer* every hour in the hospital.

Hand washing decreases surgical site infections. You, your family, and other hospital visitors should wash hands upon entering and leaving your room. Nursing and medical staff are also expected to wash their hands. You are encouraged to remind them as needed.

Your incisional dressing will be changed daily. If it becomes soiled, please alert your nurse.

After Hospital Discharge:

You may gently wash over your surgical incision in the shower at least daily, using soap or Hibiclens.

You should wash your hands before and after changing a bandage around your surgical incision.

Watch for signs of infection – spreading redness, increased pain, high fever, or purulent drainage. Any concerns should be addressed with your surgeon.

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