

Preventing surgical site (wound) infections

A patient's guide

As part of Royal Papworth Hospital's commitment to patient safety and wellbeing, we aim to reduce the likelihood of you developing a surgical site infection.

The purpose of this leaflet is to offer you and your family information, so that you will be aware of things both you and the staff can do to help prevent wound complications after your surgery.

The word **bacteria** has been used in this leaflet to describe commonly used terms, such as bugs or germs.

When you have your operation, bacteria from your body or the environment can enter your body through the cut made by the surgeon, either during or after surgery.

If the bacteria multiply, they can cause an infection, called a **surgical site infection**.

The staff will take every precaution to avoid the development of a surgical site infection, but you can help us reduce the risk by following these steps:

Octenisan® Nasal Gel

You will be given a tube of Octenisan® nasal gel to help reduce the number of bacteria in your nose.

Please apply as directed on the patient information leaflet inside the box unless you have any known allergy or sensitivity to its contents.

The nasal gel is to be applied to each nostril twice a day for five days: two days before your surgery date, on your day of surgery and continuing for two days after.

It is important that once applied into each nostril, the outside of the nose is massaged well to ensure the treatment is effective. You may be able to taste the nasal gel.

If you do not get the opportunity to apply for two days before surgery, continue to apply the gel until five days of application are achieved. For example, if you start on the day of surgery, continue for four days afterwards.

When to use Octenisan® body wash:

Octenisan® body wash:		Day -2	Day -1	Day 0	Day +1	Day +2
		Two days before surgery	One day before surgery	Day of surgery	One day after surgery	Two days after surgery
Body		X	X	X	X	X
Hair			X	X		

Octenisan® body wash

Octenisan® is a special antiseptic wash that helps to reduce the number of bacteria on the skin and therefore helps to reduce the risk of wound infection.

Please use the Octenisan® wash provided as instructed by the nurse prior to hospital admission.

A table outlining when to use the body wash can be found above.

You should wash your body for five days, starting two days before surgery and continuing until two days after.

You should wash your hair the day before surgery and the morning of surgery.

On the evening before and the

morning of your operation, shower thoroughly using the Octenisan® wash (undiluted) from either the bottle of Octenisan® given to you at pre-admission clinic or from the dispenser available in ward bath/shower rooms. You will also need to shampoo your hair with this product.

If you need assistance showering, please ask a member of staff.

If you are unable to use a shower, please use the product instead of your usual soap when washing in the bath or sink.

1. Wet your hair and body first. Use approximately 30ml (about two tablespoons) of Octenisan® (undiluted) onto a clean, ideally disposable washcloth if using in hospital

or a clean flannel if at home.

2. Apply the Octenisan® all over your body using a gentle circular rubbing motion - paying particular attention to your armpits, belly button, groin, perineum (the skin separating the genitalia and anus) and skin folds.
3. Ensure all skin surfaces from the neck down are covered by the Octenisan® body wash.
4. When also needing to wash your hair, shampoo your hair with some more Octenisan® using another fresh cloth or flannel.
5. Ensure that the Octenisan® stays on your skin (and hair) for one full minute.
6. Rinse thoroughly under the shower to remove all soap residue.
7. Dry your skin thoroughly (following guidance below).

Make sure you use two clean and dry towels per shower:

- One for the upper body (waist up).

- One for the lower body (waist down).
- If you have long hair, use an extra towel for this.
- After the shower, discard the washcloths and wash the flannels and towels.
- Put on clean clothes and bedding i.e., fresh nightwear or hospital gown.

The ward staff will ensure that the relevant areas of your body hair are clipped before surgery (please do not try to shave these areas yourself). Clipping should be done as close to the time of surgery as possible but must be done before your second shower.

Diabetes

Our surveillance data has shown that having diabetes increases your risk of developing a surgical site infection. If you have diabetes, it is advised that you contact your GP prior to surgery for a HbA1c test, to ensure that your diabetes is effectively managed. It is important that your blood glucose levels are well controlled to prevent the risk of wound complications.

Whilst you are an inpatient, your blood glucose will be monitored

regularly, and you will be seen by the diabetes specialist nurses if required. On discharge you will be referred to your GP for ongoing monitoring.

Post-operatively

After surgery, your wound site(s) will be covered with a dressing that will help healing and protect from infection:

- Staff involved in your care will know how to look after your wound and they will change or remove the dressings, as necessary.
- Please do not touch your wound site yourself as you can cause bacteria to enter your body and cause infection as described above.
- The nurses will advise you when it is safe to shower post operatively, and you can use your normal liquid soap.
- Please do not apply any lotions, ointments, or talcum powder to any of the wounds until fully healed.

All staff are required to either wash their hands or use the hand rub before they care for you, and we encourage you to ask them if they have done this. It is also

important that you keep your hands clean to prevent infection, particularly following surgery.

All female patients are strongly advised to bring in at least two soft, ideally front fastening bras for use post-surgery to wear for a minimum of 12 weeks, including when sleeping, to support the healing chest wound.

When required to cough post-surgery, it is important that you support your sternum as well as cover your mouth to prevent the spread of infection.

We recommend following the self-hug cough technique as presented on the next page. Supporting your chest helps your sternum heal and prevents the wound from opening, which can be a risk for infection.

Your surgeon may also choose to apply a suction dressing powered by a small mobile pump to the sternal (chest) wound. This system can help to reduce the risk of surgical site infection. It is removed approximately one week after surgery. This therapy is known as **Incisional VAC**.

Self-hug cough technique for post cardiothoracic surgical patients



Take a tissue



Press into a self-hug position with your arms



Cough into the tissue applying simple pressure to your chest with your folded arms



Dispose of the tissue in a receptacle



Decontaminate or wash your hands

We hope you will be reassured by the information contained in this leaflet and understand that the measures being taken are part of our continued commitment to the prevention and control of infection within Royal Papworth Hospital.

If you do develop any surgical wound problems post discharge from Royal Papworth Hospital, do contact your GP in the first instance.

However, please do also contact the surgical site infection surveillance team to inform us of the issue, so that we can monitor infection rates and offer guidance as required.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact any of the teams below:

Surgical site (wound) infection surveillance

Telephone: 01223 638033

Wound care team

Telephone: 01223 638000

Cardiac support nurse

Telephone: 01223 638000

Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

A member of Cambridge University Health Partners



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View a digital version of this leaflet by scanning the QR code.



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