

# Preventing Surgical Site Infections Before Surgery

Learning how to protect yourself and loved ones from infections related to surgery is the one the most important steps you can take before surgery. An infection can happen during or after surgery on any part of the body where surgery takes place. An infection can also happen only on the skin. These infections can affect recovery time and comfort. Patients and their caregivers can help lower the risk of infection after surgery. What to do:

## DAYS OR WEEKS BEFORE SURGERY:

- Bring an up-to-date list of all the medications you take. Be sure to include the dosages. Talk with your surgeon about why you take each medication and how it helps.
- Let the surgeon know if you are allergic to any medication and what happens when you take it. Be sure to tell the surgeon if you are allergic to any antibiotics, as it is likely you will receive antibiotics during your surgery.
- Tell the surgeon if you have diabetes or high blood sugar, or if family members do.
- If you are diabetic, follow your doctor's instructions on controlling your blood sugar. High blood sugars are associated with higher rates of infection.
- Stop smoking. People who stop smoking at least two weeks before their surgery have a lower rate of infection.
- If you get an infection before your surgery (cold, flu, etc.), contact your doctor as this may require rescheduling your surgery.

## THE DAY OR NIGHT BEFORE SURGERY:

- **Take extra good care of your body.**
- Do not shave near where you will have surgery. Shaving can irritate your skin, which may lead to infection. If you are a man who shaves your face every day, ask your surgeon if it is OK to do so.
- Shower and shampoo the night before and the morning of your surgery.

## AT THE TIME OF SURGERY:

- Bring a written up-to-date medication list with you. Be sure to include the dosages.
- The staff may apply a warming device or warmed blankets while you are waiting for your surgery. Ask for extra blankets if you feel cold. Keeping warm before your surgery can lower your risk of infection.
- Any body hair at the incision site will be removed by clippers. Shaving the incision site may irritate the skin, which may lead to infection.

As an active partner in your care, you play an important role in reducing the risk of infection after surgery. City of Hope® encourages you to speak up, ask questions and share information with your surgeon and other members of your care team.