

PREVENTING INFECTIONS AT HOME

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While recovering from any sort of injury, surgery or illness, it is important to do all you can to prevent an infection. An infection can complicate your recovery and may result in a return trip to the hospital.

So when you get home, continue to your follow infection prevention strategies. Wash your hands often – before and after you eat, after you use the restroom, before and after you change your bandages, and after you come in contact with another person.

Make sure you follow the proper hand washing routine you have developed. Remember to wash for at least 20 seconds and use enough soap to cover all surfaces including between your fingers, on your palms, and on the backs of both hands.

You may have nurses who come into your home to help with your medical care, or a family member may be helping to care for you. Whichever the case, make sure the person treating you washes their hands and wears gloves. Keep all of your supplies clean, dry and away from food.

Carefully follow your discharge instructions about when and how often to change your dressings. Ask your healthcare provider what special precautions are necessary when you are home.

For example, soiled dressings, bandages, bed linen or clothing must be properly disposed of. Ask your healthcare provider how to properly dispose of these items in your area. Do not put any needles or other medical items in your recycling.

Watch for signs and symptoms of infection. Some signs of infection include: fatigue – you may feel more and more tired each day instead of steadily getting better, a fever of 101 degrees or higher, chills, vomiting, or diarrhea.

If you develop an infection at a surgical or wound site, you may notice the area feels hot and may be red; the area smells foul; increased swelling around the incision area; tenderness and soreness, and drainage from the wound site. If you do notice any signs of infection, contact your healthcare provider.

Don't skip your follow-up appointments. There, your healthcare provider will check your surgical site for any signs of infection. Use this time to ask your healthcare provider any questions you may have.

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If friends and family plan to visit you while you are recovering, make sure they are healthy and germ-free before they come. At this stage of your recovery, it is better to delay a visit than risk an infection. Your friends and family want the best for you and will understand.

And finally, keep all of your vaccinations up to date, including the flu shot and pneumonia vaccine.

An infection can be serious and can mean a return trip to the hospital. Do all you can to prevent an infection. The healthy habits you develop as you recover will stay with you and safeguard your overall health in the future.