Preventing Infections at Home

While you are recovering from an injury, surgery, or illness, it is important to do all you can to prevent an infection, which could complicate your recovery and lead to a return trip to the hospital. As you recover at home, follow this checklist to prevent an infection.

DO: Follow your discharge instructions, especially about when and how often to change your dressings. Ask your healthcare provider what special precautions are necessary when you are home. DO: Dispose of soiled dressings and bandages. Wash your bed linens and clothes separately in hot water and bleach to kill germs.

DO: Watch for symptoms of an infection. Symptoms of an infection include fatigue, a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher, chills, vomiting or diarrhea. If you notice any signs of infection, call your healthcare provider. DO: Wash your hands often for 20 seconds, especially before and after you eat, after you use the bathroom, and before and after you change your bandages to prevent the spread of germs.

If a nurse or loved one is helping with your medical care: DO: Make sure they wash their hands and wear gloves when they treat you. DO: Go to all your follow-up doctor appointments. Your healthcare provider will check your incision for any signs of infection. Take this time to ask your healthcare provider any questions you may have about recovery. DO: Keep all your vaccinations up to date including an annual flu shot and pneumonia vaccines.

DO Not: Allow friends and family who are sick to visit you until they are healthy. If you are exposed to sick loved ones, it could put you at risk for infection.

Getting an infection while recovering at home can be serious, so it's important to do all you can to prevent the spread of germs. Follow this checklist to stay healthy as you recover at home.