

What is a Surgical Site Infection (SSI)?

Surgical site infections (SSI) occur when harmful germs enter your body through the surgical site (any cut the surgeon makes in the skin to perform the operation). Infections happen because germs are everywhere – on your skin, in the air and on things you touch. Most infections are caused by germs found on and in your body. An infection can develop within 30 days of an operation, or sometimes even up to one year if an implant (such as a knee or hip joint implant) is used.

Infections can be minor, or occasionally they can increase complications that result in a longer length of stay in the hospital, or an increased readmission rate for patients. For the purposes of public reporting, SSIs are calculated for hip and knee joint replacements.

How is SSI calculated?

# of Hip/Knee joint replacement surgeries who received usual antibiotics within 60 min of skin incision	+	# of Hip/Knee joint replacement surgeries who received vancomycin within 120 min of skin incision	X 1000
<hr/> Total number of patients during the reporting period who had a primary knee/hip joint replacement surgical procedure			

Trillium Health Centre’s SSI Data:

Trillium-Mississauga	Q1 2010/11
Total number of patients receiving antibiotics administered “on time”	219
The percentage of patients with antibiotics administration within the appropriate time prior to surgery	100%

How is SSI treated?

- Most infections are treated with antibiotics - the type of medication will depend on the germ causing the infection.
- An infected skin wound may be reopened and cleaned.
- If an infection occurs where an implant is placed, the implant may be removed.
- If the infection is deep within the body, another operation may be needed to treat it.

What is Trillium Health Centre doing to improve patient safety?

At Trillium Health Centre, we are always looking at how we are performing and use different *performance indicators* to get a sense of where we excel and where improvements could be made. This information is essential to Trillium’s commitment to providing quality and safe care for its patients.

Our Board of Directors and Management Team believe it is important that the community we care for has access to this performance information. Trillium strongly supports the provincial government’s new public reporting regime because we believe it will inspire improved performance, enhance patient safety, and strengthen the public’s confidence in Ontario’s hospitals.



What is Trillium Health Centre doing to prevent SSI?

Trillium Health Centre's health care teams are taking the following precautions to prevent SSIs:

- Ensure all instruments are sterilized to manufacturer's requirements.
- Practicing proper hand-washing techniques. Before the operation, the surgical team scrub their hands and arms with a disinfecting solution.
- Cleaning the site where your incision is made with an antiseptic solution.
- Wearing surgical attire (scrub suits), long-sleeved sterile surgical attire, and masks, hats that completely cover hair, shoe covers and sterile gloves.
- Covering the patient with a sterile drape with a hole where the incision is made.
- Closely watching the patient's blood sugar levels, if a patient is diabetic, after surgery to make sure it stays within a normal range. High blood sugar delays the wound from healing.
- Warming IV fluids, increasing the temperature in the operating room and providing warm-air blankets (if necessary) to ensure a normal body temperature. A lower-than-normal body temperature during or after surgery prevents oxygen from reaching the wound, making it harder for your body to fight infection.
- Clipping, not shaving any hair that has to be removed. This prevents tiny nicks and cuts through which germs can enter.
- Covering your closed wound (closed with stitches or staples) with sterile dressing for one or two days. If your wound is open, packing it with sterile gauze and cover it with sterile dressing.

In addition, Trillium Health Centre's surgical teams are introducing a surgical safety checklist tested and approved by the World Health Organization.

What can patients and their families do to help reduce their chances of infection?

- Patients should follow the pre-operation instructions provided by the surgeon and health care team.
- Ask lots of questions. Learn what steps the hospital is taking to reduce the danger of infection.
- If your doctor instructs, shower or bathe with antiseptic soap the night before and day of your surgery. You may be asked to use a special antibiotic cleanser that you don't rinse off.
- Do not apply any creams, lotions, perfumes, hairspray, make-up, nail polish, jewelry, etc. prior to surgery.
- Do not shave surgical site two weeks prior to surgery to help prevent infection.
- If you smoke, stop or at least cut down. Ask your doctor about ways to quit.
- Only take antibiotics when told by a health care provider. Using antibiotics when they're not needed can create germs that are harder to kill. If prescribed, finish all your antibiotics, even if you feel better.
- After your surgery, eat healthy foods.
- Ensure you get enough rest to support your healing and well-being.
- When you return home, care for your incision as instructed by your health care provider.

Frequent hand cleaning is a good way to help prevent the spread of infection. Hand hygiene involves everyone in the hospital, including patients, their families and their visitors.