

Infection Prevention and You



How to prepare for an outpatient surgery procedure

What is outpatient surgery?

Outpatient surgery (also known as ambulatory surgery) are procedures that do not require an overnight hospital stay. These procedures take place in ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs). ASCs are facilities that provide surgery, medical procedures, and diagnostic services outside of the hospital. Some commonly performed outpatient procedures include endoscopy/colonoscopy, hemodialysis, cataract surgery, ear/nose/throat procedures, gynecological procedures, gall bladder removal, kidney/bladder procedures, arthroscopic/orthopedic procedures, and hernia operations.

It is helpful for patients and families to educate themselves before an outpatient procedure about how to prevent getting an infection. A healthcare-associated infection (HAI) is an infection that patients can get while receiving medical care.

The germs that cause infections in an ASC may be passed through:

- A medical procedure, such as surgical procedure.
- A medical device, such as a surgical instrument.
- Contact with contaminated surfaces, such as hands, bed rails, and door handles.
- Improper use of antibiotic medicines.

To reduce your chances of getting an HAI, always ask your healthcare team about what steps are being taken to prevent HAIs.

Hand hygiene

Keeping clean hands is the most important way to prevent the spread of infection. Be sure to ask your healthcare team if they have cleaned their hands before caring for you. It is very important that you speak up for your care! As a patient, it is also very important that you also practice good hand hygiene. Be sure to clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer after using the restroom and before eating. Clean your hands after sneezing or blowing your nose, and before and after touching your surgical wound or dressings. Make sure to remind your friends and family to clean their hands before visiting you after your surgical procedures.

Safe injection practices

Another way that ASCs keep patients safe is by using syringes and needles only once. Your healthcare team should never give medications from the same syringe to more than one patient, even if the needle is changed. Remember: One Needle; One Syringe; only One Time. As with any aspect of your care, if you have any concerns always question your healthcare team.

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Before your procedure

Always discuss the ways to prevent infections with your healthcare team prior to surgery.

- **Communication:** Make sure that you tell your doctor about any medical complications that you may have prior to surgery such as, allergies, diabetes, or obesity as these issues can affect your surgery and treatment. Be sure that you understand the risks and benefits of having your procedure. Also, be sure that you know how you can prevent an infection from occurring once you go home.
- **Antibiotics:** You might be prescribed antibiotics before some surgeries to prevent an infection. Find out if you will need antibiotics before your procedure. The overuse or misuse of antibiotics has led to an increase in the spread of hard-to-treat germs. Make sure you know exactly why you are being given an antibiotic and ask your healthcare provider if you really need it.
- **Your skin and surgical site preparation:** Your healthcare team may suggest that you bathe with a special antibacterial soap before arriving for your procedure. This special soap removes bacteria from your skin and helps prevent post-operative infections from occurring. It is important that you follow all instructions given to you and ask questions if you do not understand.

After your procedure

After your procedure, you will want to make sure you understand what to expect during recovery, both at the facility and at home. Ask who will be responsible for your care after you are discharged. If you have a wound, make sure you receive instructions for wound care.

Make sure you have contact information, so you know who to call if you develop one or more of the following symptoms of infection:

- The skin around your wound is red, swollen, painful/sore, and/or feels hot.
- You have a high temperature/fever.
- Your wound has a green or yellow colored discharge (pus).
- You feel generally unwell or feverish.

While most procedures go smoothly, it is important to find out what would happen if you developed complications and required emergency care.

As more and more procedures are being performed outside of the hospital and in ASCs and clinics, it is important to practice safe guards as described above to keep yourself and your loved ones infection free.

Additional resources

- The CDC—HAIs in Outpatient Settings www.cdc.gov/hai/settings/outpatient/outpatient-settings.html
- The CDC—Injection Safety <https://www.cdc.gov/injectionsafety/patients.html>
- APIC—What are HAIs www.apic.org/For-Consumers/Monthly-alerts-for-consumers/Article?id=what-are-healthcare-associated-infections
- APIC *Infection Prevention and You*—Infection Prevention Basics <http://www.apic.org/infectionpreventionbasics>

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