



**ST VINCENT'S
PRIVATE HOSPITAL**
MELBOURNE
A FACILITY OF ST VINCENT'S HEALTH AUSTRALIA

PREVENTING SURGICAL SITE INFECTION AND PRE-OPERATIVE WASHING

Thank you for choosing St Vincent's Private Melbourne for your care.

What is a Surgical Site Infection?

There are lots of germs on our skin and in our environment. Most of them cause no harm however, these germs can enter the body through the incision made by the surgeon. The majority of people whom have surgery will not acquire an infection.

A surgical site infection can develop any time from 2-3 days after your surgery until the wound has fully healed. (Usually 2-3 weeks after your surgery).

What can increase the risk of a surgical site infection?

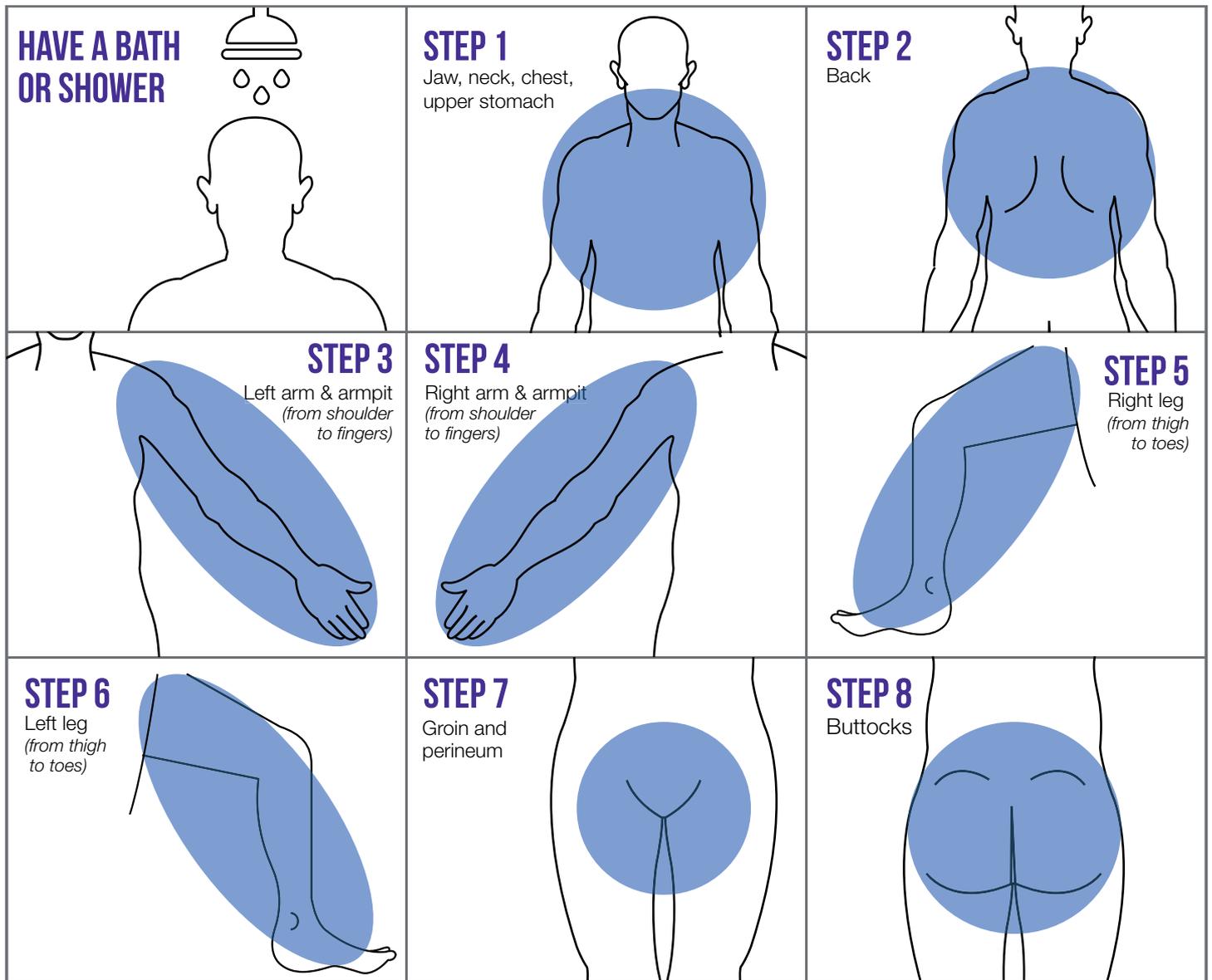
There are identifiable risk factors that can make a wound infection more likely.

- Do you have diabetes?
- Do you smoke?
- Do you take steroids?

What can we do to reduce the risk of a surgical site infection?

- It is recommended that you do not shave on or near the area where surgery will take place. If hair removal is required then staff can do this with clippers prior to start of surgery.
- It is important that your skin is clean on the day of your operation. Please shower or wash your skin on at least the night before your surgery. This can be completed with either an antimicrobial or non-medicated soap. *(Please refer to diagram overleaf).*
- Wear clean undergarments and clothes following your shower/wash and undergarments should be changed daily following surgery, (particularly if they have contact with wound site.). Use freshly laundered bed linen/towel following shower/wash.
- Avoid touching your wound unnecessarily. If you do need to touch your wound please ensure that you wash your hands before and after touching wound.
- During your stay your wound will be monitored for any signs of infection. If you think a staff member may have forgotten to wash their hands before they touch your wound, please remind them. **We will not mind being reminded of the importance of cleaning our hands.**

Advice for shower or wash prior to surgery



What else can you do to reduce the risk of a surgical site infection?

- Clean your hands before and after toileting and before meals
- It is important that both you and your visitors avoid touching your wound/invasive device or areas of broken skin.
- Please remind your visitors to clean their hands with either soap or water or alcohol based hand rub before and after visiting you.

How can you care for your wound at home?

- Always ask your nurse or Doctor for advice on your wound care before you go home.
- Inform your doctor or nurse immediately if you experience any of the following: the skin around your wound becoming red, hot to touch, inflamed or painful, discharge that may be offensive to smell, yellowish/green in colour, have a temperature or generally feel unwell.
- If you are replacing your dressing please ensure that the area around your wound is completely dry before placing new dressing on wound.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to call either your surgeon or Infection Prevention (03) 9411 7668

All information contained within this leaflet is true and accurate at the time of printing.