Everyone in ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) plays a role in preventing surgical site and other harmful infections.

Hand hygiene is one of the most important ways to prevent infections. Health care personnel will clean their hands before and after patient care.

Other important ways to prevent surgical site and other infections at ASCs are—

### Cleaning, Disinfection, and Sterilization
- Follow fully the instructions on how to use cleaning and disinfection supplies.
- Follow the manufacturers’ and ASC’s instructions for cleaning and disinfecting medical equipment.
- Get training each year on high-level disinfection for all the different types of scopes that are reprocessed.
- Make sure only highly trained experts perform high-level disinfection and sterilization.

### Environment of Care
- Keep the health care environment clean and safe.
- Make daily rounds (walk around) in the health care environment to assure cleanliness and patient safety.
- Report any environmental care problems as soon as possible so they can be fixed.
- Clean hands when moving from a dirty to a clean task on the same patient or after touching the patient or any items in the patient’s environment.

### Safe Injection Practices
- Clean hands before handling medications or syringes.
- Disinfect the top (rubber septum) of any medication vial with alcohol before piercing it with a sterile needle.
- Use a sterile needle and syringe one time on one patient only.
- Use an intravenous solution bag and tubing for one patient only.
- Prepare medication in clean area, separate from patient care area and away from used items. If medication is used at the bedside, throw it out after it is used on one patient.
- Use a single-dose vial of medication whenever possible.
- Dedicate a multiuse vial to one patient if medication is drawn up in the patient care area.
- Always use a new, sterile needle and new, sterile syringe.

Surgical site infections are infections that can occur after surgery in the part of the body where the surgery took place.1

**Surgical site infections are—**

**Dangerous**
Each year in the U.S., there are about 300,000 surgical site infections. Patients with surgical site infections are 2 to 11 times as likely to die as a result.2

**Costly**
Each year in the U.S., surgical site infections cost between $3.5 million and $1 billion.2

**Preventable**
Surgical site infections are one of the most common healthcare-associated infections, but most of them are preventable.2

* Because ASCs do not yet report surgical site infection data, these statistics are based on U.S. hospital data.

### Patients and families should be encouraged to—
- **ASK** staff if they have washed their hands
- **BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED** in care by—
  - Avoiding bringing their own medical equipment to the ASC, unless granted special permission to do so
  - Always cleaning their own hands
- **CLEARLY SPEAK UP** if they have concerns that staff may not be following safe practices or if they observe a safety issue

Learn more about infection prevention at ambulatory surgical centers at [www.ahrq.gov/haiamburgery](http://www.ahrq.gov/haiamburgery).


AHRQ Safety Program for Ambulatory Surgery

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