

Take Care of Yourself After an Amputation or Other Surgery

This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

Take care of yourself after an amputation or other surgeries. Any wound or cut from amputation or surgery can get infected. This happens when germs or dirt enters your body through an opening in your skin. After your surgery, pay attention to your body and watch for these problems that infections can cause:

- Warmth
- Redness and swelling
- White or yellow pus coming out of the wound or cut
- Red lines under your skin running up towards your chest from the wound or cut
- Sudden increase in pain
- Soreness or tenderness that hurts a lot

Take good care of the part of your limb that's left; take special care of the cut where the limb was removed. Infection can lead to problems, a need for more surgeries, or even death. If you think you're getting an infection, take care of it as soon as you can. Follow the instructions your nurse or doctor gave you. If you're taking antibiotics, take *all* the pills, even if the redness or soreness gets better or goes away. Try to rest whenever possible. Put your limb up higher than your chest, if you can. This will help it heal. Seek medical help right quickly if you have any of these things:

- Cold or cool skin or limb
- Wound or area that smells bad
- Feeling very tired or achy
- Sore or cut has thick brown or gray discharge
- Or skin around the sore or cut turns black or ugly

Remember, the best way to handle an infection is to *stop it before it starts*. Here are some things you can do:

- Wash your limb with mild soap and clean water, then rinse and pat dry. Do this every day or more if you sweat a lot or if it's red or sore.
- Wash anything that touches your skin, like socks, with mild soap and clean water, then rinse and dry. Don't put a wet sock or other cloth on your arm or leg.
- Use lotion to avoid flaking, peeling, and dry skin. Apply lotion at night, before going to bed. If you don't have any lotion, use fresh vegetable cooking oil, for example coconut or olive oil. Never use lard or used cooking oil.
- Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water to keep your skin healthy.

For more information about how to take care of yourself after an amputation or other surgery, please visit www.cdc.gov and search on "amputees" or www.amputee-coalition.org.

For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.