

Patient Advice and Liaison Service

If you need general information or advice about Trust services, please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 020 3594 2040 or visit www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/pals. Alternatively please contact staff who are providing your care if you require clinical advice.

Large print and other languages

For this leaflet in large print, please speak to your clinical team.

For help interpreting this leaflet in other languages, please ring 020 8223 8934.

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Patient information

Come clean for Surgery



At Barts Health we are committed to your safety and ensuring you recover as quickly as possible after your surgery.

About 5 per cent of patients will develop an infection of their surgical wound site after an operation. This can cause discomfort or pain and may prolong your hospital stay.

Preventing infections involves many steps. In the operating department we use sterile instruments, wear special clothing, pay meticulous attention to handwashing and will prepare your skin using an antiseptic solution. However, the first step in preventing infection of your wound can start with you.

Help us ensure that you have the best possible outcome after your surgery by 'coming clean for surgery'.

When shall I wash?

You should wash the evening before or the day of the surgery. This is recommended by National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

This can be done at home or in the hospital depending on where you are staying.

If you are coming to the hospital for a morning surgery, we recommend that you clean at home to avoid delay.

What shall I use to wash?

- Ordinary soap or shower gel for the body.
- Ordinary shampoo for hair.

For some operations a special antiseptic solution will be provided for washing before the operation, you will be notified if this is the case.

How shall I wash?

The aim is to remove any dirt to ensure you are as clean as possible prior to surgery.

Give your whole body a thorough wash with soap or shower gel. Wash your hair with shampoo and rinse thoroughly to remove any residue.

After your wash, dry yourself with a fresh clean towel, put on clean clothing or pyjamas and sleep in clean bedding.

If you are staying in the hospital prior to surgery, clean hospital gowns and bedding will be provided by the ward.

Your skin will then be prepared with surgical cleansing and antiseptic solution by the scrub team and surgeon prior to the surgery.

Are there any areas in the body I need to pay attention to?

Please ensure your whole body is cleaned including private body parts and teeth.

Do I need to shave?

This is not recommended. Any cut or abrasion to your skin may delay the operation as the wound will need to be assessed formally.

I am unable to wash myself, what shall I do?

If you are in hospital and unable to wash yourself due to illness or injury please ask your nurse for assistance.