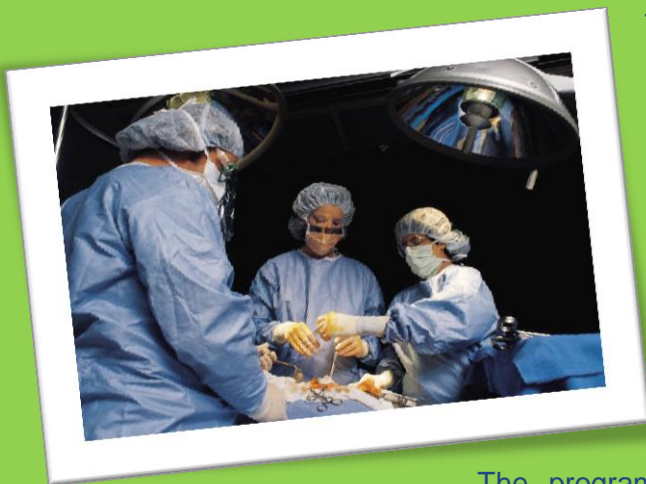


# SSII Surgical Site Infection Improvement Programme

Find out more: visit [www.hqsc.govt.nz](http://www.hqsc.govt.nz) and go to Surgical Site Infection Surveillance

## For the first time New Zealand has a sophisticated patient safety initiative that will reduce harm caused to patients by surgical site infections (SSIs).

Healthcare associated infections (HAIs) such as SSIs are a significant problem worldwide. Up to 10 per cent of patients admitted to modern hospitals acquire one or more HAI. SSIs can cause emotional and financial stress, serious illness, longer hospital stays, long-term disabilities, and can result in loss of life. The consequences for both health services, and most importantly the patient, mean that the prevention of SSIs is extremely important.



The good news is that a significant number of SSIs are preventable. To address this, in 2012 the Health Quality & Safety Commission (the Commission) launched New Zealand's first national quality improvement programme to improve patient safety and reduce the incidence of SSIs.

Since then the Surgical Site Infection Improvement Programme, in collaboration with district health boards throughout the country, has developed and implemented a consistent, evidence-based approach to collecting and reporting SSIs.

The programme was also established to encourage culture change and practice improvements that better support the prevention of SSIs. Combined, these components will ensure that a cycle of continuous quality improvement for reducing SSIs can be achieved in a sustainable way.

Year one of the programme focused on hip and knee arthroplasty surgery, and a range of best practice interventions will soon be rolled-out to DHBs. This commences in November 2013 with a prophylactic antibiotic intervention, with a skin preparation intervention and a clipping not shaving intervention following shortly after.

Over the next one to two years the SSI Improvement Programme will focus on infections following cardiac bypass graft surgeries (CABG) and caesarean sections. The Programme has been intentionally spread over a number of years to ensure that a quality system, national adoption, culture and practice change can be achieved.

With all DHBs now on board, over time, the programme will:

- Improve patient safety and experience
- Reduce costs associated with SSIs – freeing up scarce health sector resources
- Free up valuable bed days
- Enable DHBs to meet and report against the new Health Quality & Safety Markers.

The SSI Improvement programme is delivered by a joint lead agency – Auckland and Canterbury DHBs – on behalf of the Commission.

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## What is a surgical site infection?

A surgical site infection is an infection that occurs after surgery in the part of the body where the surgery took place.

Surgical site infections can sometimes be superficial infections involving the skin only. Other surgical site infections are more serious and can involve tissues under the skin, organs, or implanted material.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/hai/ssi/ssi.html](http://www.cdc.gov/hai/ssi/ssi.html)

## Did you know?

Most SSIs are preventable...

This makes SSI reduction a key patient safety priority for the New Zealand health sector.

Surgical site infections can cause emotional and financial stress, serious illness, longer hospital stays, long-term disabilities, and may even result in loss of life.

SSIs can have a significant impact on length of stay. International research shows that SSIs can prolong a patient's hospital stay by 7.4 days, at a cost of \$1000 per day (Roy, 2003).

Research tells us that up to ten per cent of patients admitted to modern hospitals acquire one or more infections.

The Surgical Site Infection Improvement Programme seeks to remove all preventable patient harm resulting from surgical site infections throughout the New Zealand health and disability sector.

We encourage you to support this important initiative in your DHB so we can improve patient safety.

## How exactly does an SSI occur?

An SSI can occur when bacteria from the skin, other parts of the body or the environment enter the incision made by the surgeon and multiply in the tissues. This causes physical symptoms as the body tries to fight the infection.

## What does an SSI look like?

Common symptoms of a surgical site infection include:

- Redness and pain around the area where surgery took place
- Drainage of cloudy fluid from the surgical wound
- Fever.

Source: [www.cdc.gov/HAI/pdfs/ssi/SSI\\_tagged.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/pdfs/ssi/SSI_tagged.pdf)

## Can SSIs be treated?

Most surgical site infections can be treated with antibiotics. The antibiotic given depends on the bacteria causing the infection. Sometimes patients with SSIs also need another surgery to treat the infection.

Source: [www.cdc.gov/HAI/pdfs/ssi/SSI\\_tagged.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/pdfs/ssi/SSI_tagged.pdf)