Wound Re-Check with Infection

You have an *infection* (unwanted germs growing in tissue) in the wound that was examined today. The cut (or wound) is a result of an injury, a bite, a recent operation or surgery, or from a special tube ("catheter") placed in a vein so that medications could be given. The exact germ causing the infection depends on what first caused the wound. It can also depend on its location, its depth, if the tissue was crushed, if the wound was hurt after the first treatment, or if dirt or other foreign material got inside the wound. The exact cause depends on medical conditions that you have such as diabetes, liver disease, past removal of your spleen, or diseases that limit the workings of the immune system. The exact cause can also be affected by whether you are currently taking *antibiotics* (a medication that kills a type of germ called "bacteria").

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of infection to a cut or wound can include:

- Pain at the wound (more than you had before).
- Pain that feels deep below the wound.
- Redness around wound.
- Red streaks on skin leading away from the wound
- Swelling (more than you had before).
- Edges of wound coming apart.
- Cloudy fluid (pus) draining from wound.
- Wound feels "hard" or firm.
- Numbness or tingling around the wound.
- Numbness or tingling of fingers or toes past the location of a nearby wound on the same limb.
- Fever
- Sweats
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

DIAGNOSIS

Your caregiver may know what is wrong based on your history. This is what was happening at the time your problems began and what problems happened today. It is also based on your caregiver's exam. Your caregiver may use *laboratory* (blood) work, tests on fluid from the wound (called "cultures"), x-rays, and other tests to make sure that your symptoms are not due to something else.

TREATMENT

- Treatment depends on how serious the infection is. Your caregiver will talk to you about medications such as antibiotics. If stitches are removed, this is to let infection drain. If the infection has developed around a catheter that you had for receiving medicines, it will be removed. If you need to be examined by a specialist, an appointment will be made, or you will receive instructions on how to make an appointment.
- An infected cut or wound takes longer to heal than one without infection. Total treatment time depends on how serious the infection is.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- If the cut is on your arm, hand, leg, or foot, keep the affected area elevated above your heart to relieve pain and swelling.
- If you have stitches that were not removed, do not play with the sutures or knots. If you do this, they will gradually loosen and may become untied.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- Keep your dressing dry and clean.
- Change your bandage in 24 hours or as directed.
- Re-check by caregiver or by telephone in 1 day.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is worsening swelling or increasing pain in the wound.

- New pus or drainage is coming from the wound.
- The area around the wound begins to turn a dark color.
- There are red streaks coming from the infected site.
- You develop a new or unexplained oral temperature above 102º F (38.9º C), or as your caregiver suggests.
- There is a new breaking open of the *wound* (edges not staying together) after sutures have been removed.

If you did not receive a tetanus shot today because you did not recall when your last one was given, **make sure to check with your caregiver to determine if you need one**.

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