

New global consensus confirms that:

The ideal surgical incision dressing supports 'undisturbed wound healing' and has a range of ideal properties

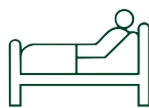
Publication summary: Morgan-Jones R. Defining excellence in incision care: Consensus from over 100 surgeons and surgical experts on the importance of undisturbed wound healing and surgical dressing properties. Global Wound Care Journal, 2025¹.

What's at stake with post-surgical incision care?



300 million surgical procedures

With over 300 million surgical procedures globally each year², incision care – including dressing choice – can have a huge impact on healing outcomes.



Surgical wound complications (SWCs)

SWCs, including surgical site infections (SSIs)³, are one of the most common causes of healthcare-acquired infections globally⁴ and it is estimated that up to 50% of SSIs may be preventable⁵.



Global variations in best practice

The importance of undisturbed healing to protect wounds from contamination has been highlighted⁶, but there has been little global guidance published and it appears that practices vary.

The consensus overview

Aim and scope

To synthesise the findings of 12 reports, based on the contributions of over 100 surgeons and surgical experts from around the world.

Methodology

The consensus is the outcome of meetings held between 2019 and 2025. Each meeting featured structured discussions on post-surgical incision care, incorporating regional considerations.

Consensus objectives

Through discussion of key areas to:

- clarify views on incision care and dressing selection for surgical wounds
- reach consensus on recommendations
- agree on the properties of the 'ideal' dressing

Consensus results

Key characteristics of the 'ideal' wound dressing for surgical incisions:

- Flexible and comfortable
- Fixes well to the skin
- Absorbent
- Skin protective
- Shower-proof
- Eliminates 'dead space' between the wound bed and dressing

The benefits of undisturbed wound healing (UWH):

- Healing is optimised if the wound remains undisturbed, unless there is a clinical reason for doing so
- UWH reduces the risks of contamination and potential infection
- UWH yields savings in both cost and healthcare professional time
- UWH reduces tissue trauma and pain during dressing change

Clinical reasons to change a dressing include:

- Saturation
- Leakage
- Excessive bleeding
- Suspected infection
- Wound edge deterioration or dehiscence
- Loss of adherence of the dressing
- Skin irritation or allergic response to the dressing

Key takeaways of the new consensus:



1. Leave the dressing in place to promote undisturbed wound healing which yields savings in total costs and healthcare professional time



2. Change dressings when clinically necessary, *not* on a set schedule



3. Choose dressings that display the 'ideal' characteristics and will not damage the skin or limit movement

References: 1. Morgan Jones R. Defining excellence in incision care: Consensus from over 100 surgeons and surgical experts on the importance of undisturbed wound healing and surgical dressing properties. Global Wound Care Journal. 2025;1(2):34-40. 2. Gillespie BM, Harbeck E, Rattray M, Liang R, Walker R, Latimer S, Thalib L, Erichsen Andersson A, Griffin B, Ware R, Chaboyer W. Worldwide incidence of surgical site infections in general surgical patients: a systematic review and meta-analysis of 488,594 patients. Int J Surg. 2021;95:106-136. 3. Sandy Hodgetts K, Ousey K, Conway B, Tariq G, Nair HKR, Djohan R, Serena T. International Best Practice recommendations for the early identification and prevention of surgical wound complications. London: Wounds International; 2020. 4. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). Healthcare associated infections: surgical site infections. In: Annual epidemiological report for 2018–2020 Stockholm: ECDC; 2023 Available from: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/healthcare-associated-infections-surgical-site-annual-2018-2020>. 5. Umscheid CA, Mitchell MD, Doshi JA, Agarwal R, Williams K, Brennan PJ. Estimating the proportion of healthcare associated infections that are reasonably preventable and the related mortality and costs. Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol. 2011;32(2):101-114. 6. World Union of Wound Healing Societies (WUWHS). Closed surgical incision management: understanding the role of NPWT [Internet]. London: Wounds International; 2016 Available from: <https://woundsinternational.com/consensus-documents/consensus-document-closed-surgical-incision-management-understanding-the-role-of-npwt-wme/>.

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