Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Preventing an Infection in Your Bone or Joint Replacement Prosthesis

This information will explain how to take antibiotics to prevent an infection in the area of your bone or joint replacement prosthesis.

When to Take Antibiotics

An infection in your prosthesis can lead to serious health problems. To prevent an infection, you must take an antibiotic when you have a bacterial infection.

You'll also need to take antibiotics before having a procedure done if you'll be at risk of an infection or if you have a cut or injury. Taking antibiotics before a procedure to prevent an infection is called taking antibiotics prophylactically.

Treating infections

If you get a bacterial infection anywhere in your body, including your throat, chest, bladder, or on your skin, let your healthcare provider know that you have a prosthesis and need antibiotics. It's important that you start the antibiotics as soon as possible. Your doctor will prescribe the antibiotic that best treats your infection.

If you get a bacterial infection, you should also call the surgeon who replaced your joint or bone.

Taking antibiotics prophylactically

Some procedures may put you at risk for an infection that could spread to the area of your prosthesis. These include:

- Anything that may cause bleeding or a break in your skin, such as dental work, removal of a corn or callus, or injury when cutting your toenails. Unclean tools can cause infection anywhere if you break the skin.
- Procedures done on your bladder, such as a cystoscopy or catheterization.
- Procedures done on your bowel, such as a colonoscopy.
- A gynecologic procedure that may cause bleeding.

If you're going to have a procedure that has a risk of causing infection, you should take an antibiotic before the procedure. Tell your healthcare provider doing the procedure that you have a prosthesis and that you need to take an antibiotic before your procedure. You should also take an antibiotic if you have a cut or injury that causes bleeding.

If your healthcare provider isn't sure what to prescribe or if you have a cut or injury, call the surgeon who replaced your joint or bone. Take the antibiotics as prescribed. Usually, 1 dose is enough, but you may need to take more if you have bleeding after your procedure.

Antibiotics for Dental Work

The chart below lists common antibiotics used for dental work. Your dentist, oral surgeon, or nurse may use other antibiotics depending on the procedure you're having. Follow their instructions.

Call your surgeon who replaced your joint if you don't get a prescription for one of these antibiotics.

Antibiotic	How to take it
Amoxicillin	By mouth, 1 hour before the procedure. Adults: 2 grams Children: 50 milligrams (mg)/kilograms (kg)
Ampicillin (If you can't take an oral antibiotic (antibiotic you take by mouth).	A shot in the muscle (IM) or in the vein (IV) within 30 minutes of having the procedure. Adults: 2 grams Children: 50 mg/kg
Clindamycin (If you're allergic to penicillin.)	By mouth, 1 hour before the procedure. Adults: 800 mg or 600 mg Children: 20 mg/kg

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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