

## Why is the Pin Site Important?

The area where the pin meets that skin is called the pin site. This opening, like any other cut in the skin, must be kept clean to reduce the risk of infection. Infections could cause the pins to loosen, require removal of the pin, and can put you at risk for other complications.

## What Do I Need to Do?

You should take an active role in your recovery by treating your external fixator with care and by maintaining clean, dry pin sites. Starting with the first day, your fixator is applied, and until the fixator is removed, your pin sites will need to be cleaned in a simple and painless manner. Generally you will use the following supplies unless otherwise instructed by your physician.

- Clean water
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Cotton tipped applicators (Q-tips)
- Small, clean dish/ glass

## Cleaning the Pin Sites

- Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water
- Mix small, equal amounts of water and hydrogen peroxide in a clean glass or dish
- Saturate Q-tip applicators in the mixture
- Cleanse the pin sites from the insertion site outwards, using a circular, rolling motion with the Q-tip
- Gently push down on the skin with the Q-tip to make sure the skin is released all around the pin
- Cleanse carefully to remove all of the crusted drainage
- Do not go back over previously cleaned area with a used Q-tip
- Use a clean Q-tip for each pin site
- You should also take care of your external fixator. The entire device should be cleaned using water and peroxide
- Pour the unused water and peroxide mixture down a drain
- Leave the pin sites open to air unless drainage is present; if drainage is present, cover it with sponges
- Follow the above procedure two times a day, or as directed by your physician

## Taking a Shower

Once you are allowed to take a shower as directed by your surgeon, you may gently clean your external fixator in the shower. Afterwards, be sure to dry the fixator thoroughly with a clean towel. Continue to clean the pin sites as directed above.

### **How Will I Know if I get an Infection?**

Even with excellent pin site care, there is a chance that pin sites may become infected or cause complications. It is possible that you might see one or more of the following symptoms of infection:

- Redness at the pin site
- Swelling at the pin site
- Thick or colored discharge from the pin site
- Loosening or movement of the pin
- Persistent pain or soreness at the pin site

If you experience any of these conditions, you should contact the office immediately.

If your physician decides to prescribe antibiotics to ward off possible infections, be sure to take them as prescribed until all the medication is used. Please, remember to clean the pin sites twice daily even if you are taking the antibiotics.