

Back to Basics: Surgical Attire and Cleanliness

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Purpose/Goal

To provide the learner with knowledge of best practices related to surgical attire and cleanliness.

Objectives

1. Discuss common areas of concern that relate to perioperative best practices.
2. Discuss best practices that could enhance safety in the perioperative area.
3. Describe implementation of evidence-based practice in relation to perioperative nursing care.

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Dr Spruce has no declared affiliation that could be perceived as posing a potential conflict of interest in the publication of this article.

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ABSTRACT

A clean perioperative environment is beneficial for both patients and perioperative team members, and surgical attire is the foundation of cleanliness. Perioperative personnel should adhere to general hygiene and wear clean, facility-laundered surgical attire in the health care facility. Implementing a surgical attire policy can be challenging because attire is linked to personal preference and image. There are ways to achieve compliance with attire recommendations as well as to implement an attire policy. To help ensure success, perioperative nurses should be prepared to help educate other team members and participate in monitoring and compliance efforts. *AORN J* 99 (January 2014) 139-143. © AORN, Inc, 2014. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aorn.2013.10.013>

Key words: *surgical attire, hygiene, cleanliness, surgical site infection.*

Joe is a circulator in a busy OR; he does not like to go out during the workweek but decided to attend his friend's bachelor party one Thursday night even though he had work the next day. Joe stayed out a little longer than planned, and when his alarm went off the next morning, he slept right through it. When Joe finally woke up, he realized that he was going to be late for work and jumped out of bed, splashed water on his face, and ran for his scrubs. The only scrubs he could find were the ones he wore the day before, which he found crumpled on the floor, but he put them on and ran for the door. Before he made it to the door, he was greeted by his sweet, loving dog, that proceeded to jump up on him and demand to be let out. He gave the dog some attention, let him out, and then headed off to the OR for work (Figure 1). There are many things wrong with this scenario if surgical cleanliness is the goal.

SURGICAL ATTIRE AND CLEANLINESS

Surgical attire is the foundation of cleanliness, although it is not the only part of this foundation. It is important for perioperative nurses to make sure they maintain good hygiene in general, wear appropriate surgical attire (ie, bouffant hair coverings; masks; eye protection; clean, freshly laundered surgical attire; cover jackets) and practice hand hygiene.¹ Like most perioperative nurses, Joe cannot plan every aspect of his life, which is why there are processes in place to help ensure that surgical patients are provided a clean and hygienic environment in which to undergo their procedures. To protect patients from the Joes of the world, there are strict requirements for health care worker and environmental hygiene, such as facility or third-party laundering of scrub attire and requiring that personnel cover their hair. The importance of a hygienic environment has been a basic of nursing care since the nineteenth

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