How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming in to or after leaving the ward. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser. Staff will let you know if this is the case.
Reconstruction using only an implant
If your breast is reconstructed using an implant on its own, a silicone prosthesis is inserted under skin and muscle of the chest to replace the volume of breast tissue that was removed at the time of your mastectomy. This is a simple operation that does not involve scars elsewhere on your body.

Occasionally your Consultant may feel a two stage procedure is needed to provide the correct cosmetic effect to give you symmetrisation of both breasts.

First Procedure
To stretch the tissue to allow an implant of the correct size to be inserted. An 'Expander-Prosthesis' is used to allow the volume of the implant adjusted by injections of salt water (saline). Expanding this implant, is usually done in your follow up outpatient clinic.

Second Procedure
Once your tissue is stretched to the correct volume we will agree an appointment for you to have the expander exchanged to a silicone implant.

Considerations
Look and Feel: It can be difficult to get a natural breast shape with an implant alone and so these kinds of reconstructions are best for women with relatively small breasts or if you have had a bilateral mastectomy.

Matching: Many women undergoing an implant based reconstruction will need to have the other breast adjusted to improve the shape and size match.

Potential Problems: Implants are prone to hardening (implant capsule formation) especially in patients who have undergone radiotherapy, deflation, visible folds and creases.

After your implant reconstruction

Infection
It is essential that you are aware of signs and symptoms which may indicate infection. Infections can occur at any point after surgery. Signs and symptoms of infection to be aware of are:

- Redness/inflammation to incision sites that is spreading.
- Excessive oozing on dressings.
- Offensive smell from dressings.
- Increased pain in the area that has been operated on that is not relieved by pain relief.
- Increased swelling to the operated area.
- Temperature – flu like symptoms feeling hot and cold or shivering.

If you are worried that you may have an infection or any other complication you must contact the Surgical Nurse Practitioner or the On-Call Plastic doctor or the ward you were discharged from. If you are unable to get the assistance needed please attend the Emergency Department at Stoke Mandeville Hospital.