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Asepsis and antisepsis

- Antisepsis is the use of chemical solutions for disinfection
- Asepsis is the absence of infectious organisms
- Aseptic techniques are those aimed at minimising infection
- Asepsis usually involves
 - The use of sterile instruments
 - The use of a gloved no touch technique
- Antisepsis is the removal of transient microorganisms from the skin and a reduction in the resident flora

History

- 1847 - Semmelweis identifies surgeons hands as route of spread of puerperal infection
- 1865 - Lister introduces hand and wound asepsis with the use of carbolic acid
- 1880 - von Bergmann invents the autoclave

Preoperative skin preparation

- Bacterial flora of the patient is the principle source of surgical wound infection
- Focal sources of sepsis should be treated prior to surgery
- In patients with active infection consideration should be given to delaying surgery
- Pre-operative showering with an antiseptic solution does not reduce infection rate

Skin shaving

- Aesthetic and makes surgery, suture and dressing removal easier
- Wound infection rate lowest when performed immediately prior to surgery
- Infection rate increased from 1% to 5% if performed more than 12 hours prior to surgery

