

## NEVER EVENTS

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# Unintended Foreign Object Left in a Patient Following a Procedure

## Definition

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### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Reporting

Examples of this event are a sponge or a towel left inside a patient after surgery and are never events regardless of whether harm occurred or not, or whether the object was discovered in hospital or after discharge. Instances where objects are intentionally left in a patient (e.g., sutures, stents, medical devices, or at the surgeon's discretion due to risk of retrieval) are excluded from this never event, as are instances where an object was left in the patient following an emergency procedure but discovered by immediate postoperative imaging.

Source: [Never Events for Hospital Care in Canada](#)

## Resources for Health Care Teams

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### Clinical Guidelines and Standards

#### National and Provincial

- Canadian Medical Protective Association: [Mitigating the Risk of Retained Foreign Bodies During Surgery](#) (online article)

#### International

- American College of Surgeons: [Revised Statement on the Prevention of Unintentionally Retained Surgical Items After Surgery](#)
- NoThing Left Behind: [What Is NoThing Left Behind?](#) (website)
- Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority: [Retained Surgical Items: Events and Guidelines Revisited](#)

### Checklists, Tools, and Resources for Prevention and Management

#### National

- Health Insurance Reciprocal of Canada: [Retained Foreign Items](#) (guidance)
- Healthcare Excellence Canada: [Retained Foreign Body: Introduction](#) (guidance)

## International

- Patient Safety in Surgery: [Risk Factors and Preventive Strategies for Unintentionally Retained Surgical Sharps: A Systematic Review](#) (journal article)
- World Journal of Surgery: [Interventions for the Prevention of Retained Surgical Items: A Systematic Review](#) (journal article)

## Other Partner Links and References

### International

- Cureus: [Retained Foreign Object Signals a Dangerous Atmosphere in the Operating Room](#) (journal article)

Additional tools and resources are available in our [Quality and Patient Safety Community of Practice](#) and [Ontario Surgical Network Community of Practice](#) on Quorum.

To learn more about Ontario Health's Never Events Reporting program for hospitals, please visit [Never Events](#).

Need this information in an accessible format? 1-877-280-8538, TTY 1-800-855-0511, [info@OntarioHealth.ca](mailto:info@OntarioHealth.ca)

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