

Using Chlorhexidine Cleanser Before Your Surgery

Information for Patients
from Infection Prevention and Control

What is chlorhexidine cleanser?

Your doctor has prescribed chlorhexidine (CHG) cleanser. Before your surgery, use this cleanser to take two special showers. These showers will help reduce the amount of germs on your skin and lower the risk of an infection at the surgical site.

You will take a shower using the CHG cleanser the night before and the morning of your surgery.

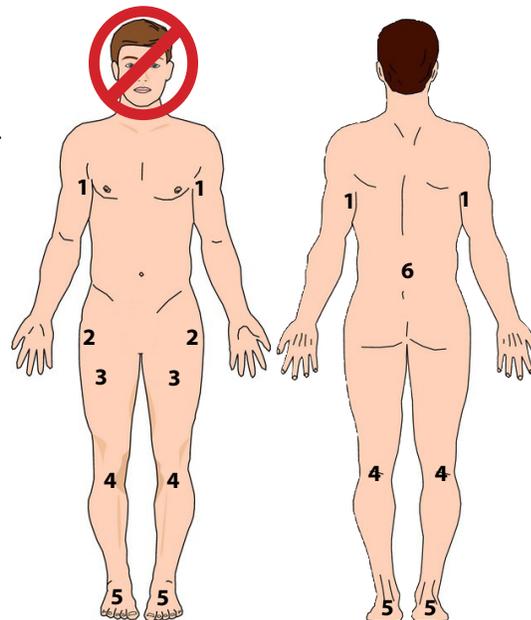
How do I shower with the chlorhexidine cleanser?



The night before your surgery:

1. Wash your face with **regular** soap.
2. If you are going to wash your hair, use **regular** shampoo. Make sure to rinse your hair completely after shampooing. **DO NOT** use hair conditioner.
3. Wet the rest of your body in the shower, then **turn the water off**.
4. Using **half** of the **CHG cleanser**, lather your whole body for at least 5 minutes. Make sure you put cleanser on your **surgical site area**, your underarms, navel, and groin areas (see Figure 1).
5. Turn the water back on and completely rinse your body.
6. Pat your skin dry with a clean towel.
7. Dress in clean clothes.
8. Get into clean bedding (you can change your bedding to clean sheets before your shower).

Figure 1.
Make sure you put CHG cleanser on the suggested areas numbered.



Special Precautions



- **DO NOT** use the CHG cleanser on your face (especially your eyes, ears, and mouth). **For external use only.**
- **If contact occurs, wash the CHG cleanser off with cold water right away.**
- **DO NOT** scrub the CHG cleanser onto your skin too hard. This might irritate your skin.
- **If your skin becomes red or itchy, STOP using the CHG cleanser. Rinse well with warm water.**
- **DO NOT** shave the area we are operating on.
- **DO NOT** use creams, oils, or deodorants of any kind on your skin.
- **DO NOT** use any hair grooming products.



The morning of your surgery:

If your skin did not react to the CHG cleanser, take another shower using the last half of the CHG cleanser on the morning of your surgery.

For instructions on how to shower with the last half of the CHG cleanser, follow steps 1 to 7 and the Special Precautions listed on page 1.

If your skin turned red or itchy after using the CHG cleanser, DO NOT USE the CHG cleanser the morning of your surgery.



Instead, on the morning of your surgery, take a regular shower:

1. Wash your face **and body** with **regular** soap. Thoroughly rinse the soap off of your face and body.
2. Wash your hair with **regular** shampoo. Rinse your hair completely after shampooing. **DO NOT** use hair conditioner.
3. Pat your skin dry with a clean towel.
4. Dress in clean clothes.

When you arrive for your surgery, please let the surgical team know that you had a reaction to the CHG cleanser.

Good Hand Hygiene Practices:



While at the hospital, remind all staff, family members, and other guests to clean their hands before and after they touch you.

Ask your nurse or doctor to show you proper hand cleaning techniques (using the waterless alcohol hand rub).

You need to clean your hands:

- After using the bathroom
- After blowing your nose
- Before eating and drinking
- Before and after you touch your dressing or wounds
- When your hands are visibly dirty (soiled)
- Before you leave your room.

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