

Chlorhexidine gluconate 2% cloths to prepare your skin for surgery

This information will answer some of your questions about how to prepare your skin before surgery. If you have any questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Preparing your skin before surgery

When you come to the hospital for your pre-assessment the nurse will give you a packet of disposable cloths that contain an antiseptic solution (chlorhexidine gluconate). You will need to use these cloths to prepare your skin before surgery. This is so that your skin is thoroughly clean, and to reduce the number of bacteria that are normally found on your skin. This will reduce the risk of you developing an infection. The decision to use chlorhexidine cloths or chlorhexidine shower is based on local decision and clinical need.

Do not use the chlorhexidine cloths, and tell the doctor or nurse caring for you if you have:

- a known allergy to chlorhexidine gluconate
- an underlying skin condition
- open skin wounds or broken skin

When to use the cleanser

The steps below outline the skin preparation process. These instructions should be followed carefully. Let your nurse know if you have any problems.

Step 1	1 week before surgery	Stop routine shaving of your body.
Step 2	The day before surgery	Morning. Wash, shower or bathe normally. Evening. Use chlorhexidine cloths.
Step 3	Morning of surgery	Use chlorhexidine cloths (these will be given to you when you arrive at hospital).

Step 1: 1 week before your surgery

Routine shaving should be stopped at least 1 week before your surgery on all areas of your body, including the legs and underarms. This is to prevent any skin irritation which could lead to an infection. Continue to wash, shower or bathe with your regular products at home. You can continue to shave your face and neck.

Step 2: The day before your surgery

In the **morning** of the **day before** your surgery you can wash, shower or bathe, including your hair, with the regular products you use at home.

On the **evening** of the **day before** surgery, your skin needs to be prepared using the chlorhexidine wash cloths. You might need someone to help you, to make sure that all body areas are covered. **Do not allow this product to come into contact with your eyes, ears or nose.** Sometimes the chlorhexidine cloths can cause skin irritation, such as a temporary itching sensation or redness. This should ease within a few hours.

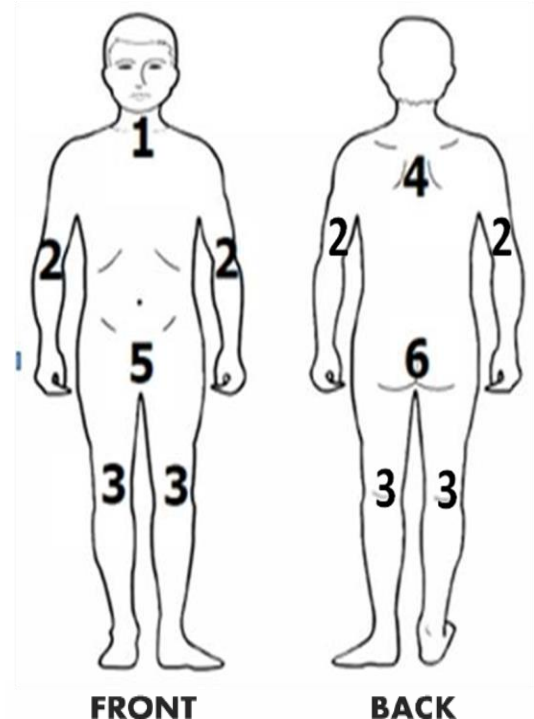
How to use chlorhexidine cloths

- 1 Remove the film and discard.
- 2 Use clean scissors to cut off the end seal of the packet.
- 3 Use 1 clean cloth to prepare each area of the body in order as shown in steps 1 to 6 below.
- 4 Wipe each area in a back-and-forth motion. Be sure to wipe each area thoroughly. Please ask somebody to help you, if needed.
- 5 Use all the cloths in the packet and discard the cloths in the rubbish bin.



Body areas to cover (use a new wipe for each step)

- 1 Wipe your neck and chest (do not use on your face).
 - 2 Wipe both arms, starting each with the shoulder and ending at fingertips. Make sure you thoroughly wipe the arm pit areas.
 - 3 Wipe both legs, starting at the thigh and ending at the toes. Make sure you thoroughly wipe behind your knees.
 - 4 Wipe your back starting at the base of your neck and ending at your waist line. Cover as much area as possible. You might need some help to make sure that all of your back area is covered.
 - 5 Wipe your right and left hip, and then your groin. Make sure you wipe the folds in the skin in the stomach and groin areas.
 - 6 Wipe the buttocks and in between them.
- When your skin is dry, put on a clean set of clothes.



Important

Once you have started preparing your skin before surgery, do not shower or bathe, or apply any bathing products, lotions, moisturisers or makeup. This is because water and ingredients commonly found in personal care products can reduce the effectiveness of chlorhexidine.

Step 3: On the morning of your surgery

Do not shower, bathe or shampoo hair as mentioned above. Skin preparation on the **morning of surgery** will be completed on the ward or in the Surgical Admissions Lounge (SAL) up to **2 hours before surgery**.

You will be given a new pack of the chlorhexidine cloths by the nurse looking after you.

Please repeat the instructions above. If you need assistance please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you. It is very important that all your body areas are covered.

Why using the cloths is important

Many germs (micro-organisms) live in and on our body, and are present in our surroundings. Our skin stops germs from entering our bodies. A surgical wound infection occurs when germs enter the cut that a surgeon makes in your skin to do an operation. Using the chlorhexidine cloths properly will reduce the number of bacteria on your skin which could enter the cut. This will help to reduce the chances of you getting a wound infection.

Looking after your wound after surgery

Before you leave the hospital we will give you information about how to care for your wound.

Allergic reactions

Some patients have allergic reactions to products containing chlorhexidine. These are very rare, but can be severe (anaphylaxis). If you have any signs of allergy after using the chlorhexidine cloths, seek medical attention immediately. Symptoms to look out for include:

- a rash
- breathing difficulties
- palpitations (fast heart beat)
- swelling of the lips, tongue and throat
- feeling unwell in any way

Let people treating you know that you have used chlorhexidine skin cleanser recently, and take the bottle with you if possible.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the hospital or department where you had your appointment.

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [web](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets) www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

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Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or contact our helpline, [phone](tel:02071888748) 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
[email](mailto:mymedicines@gstt.nhs.uk) mymedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

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A list of resources is available on request