

Preparing your skin before surgery using chlorhexidine gluconate 2% cloths

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about how to prepare your skin before surgery. The purpose of preparing your skin before surgery is to ensure that your skin is thoroughly cleansed to reduce the amount of bacteria that is normally found on the skin. This will reduce the risk of you developing an infection. If you have any further 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), which you need to use to prepare your skin before surgery. Preparation should start two days before your planned date of surgery.

Do not use the chlorhexidine cloths and let the doctor or nurse caring for you know if any of the following are relevant to you.

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

The three steps below outline the skin preparation process, which should be carefully followed (please let your nurse know if you have any difficulties).

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| Step 1 | Two days before surgery | Stop routine shaving of your body |
| Step 2 | One 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: Two days before your surgery

Routine shaving should be stopped at least two days 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

On the morning of the day before your surgery you can wash / shower / 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, as explained below. You may need somebody to help you, to ensure that all body areas are covered. **Do not allow this product to come into contact with your eyes, ears, or mouth.**

Occasionally the chlorhexidine cloths may cause skin irritation such as a temporary itching sensation and/or redness. Showering or shaving immediately before applying may increase this effect.

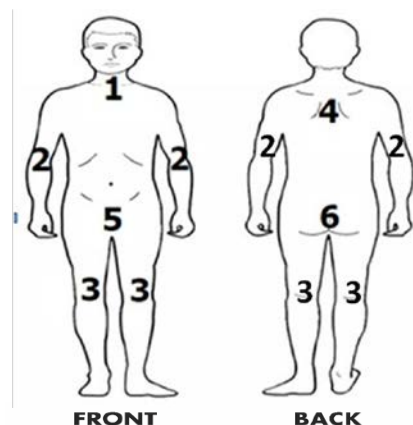
Directions for using the chlorhexidine cloths

1. Remove the cellophane film and discard.
2. Using clean scissors cut off the end seal of the package.
3. Use one clean cloth to prepare each area of the body in order as shown in steps one to six below. If you need more cloths, please ask a nurse.
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 package and discard the cloths in the rubbish bin.



Body areas to cover (please use one new wipe per 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. Be sure to thoroughly wipe the arm pit areas.
3. Wipe both legs, starting at the thigh and ending at the toes. Be sure to 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 may need some help to make sure that all the back area is covered.
5. Wipe your right and left hip followed by your groin. Be sure to wipe folds in the stomach and groin areas.
6. Wipe the buttocks and in between them. Once your skin is dry put on a clean set of clothes.



Once you have started preparing your skin before surgery please **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.

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Step 3: On the morning of your surgery

Do not shower, bathe or shampoo hair as mentioned in the previous section once your skin preparation has begun. Skin preparation on the morning of surgery will be completed on the ward or in the Surgical Admissions Lounge (SAL) up to two hours before surgery.

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

Please repeat the instructions above. If you require assistance please do not hesitate to speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you. It is very important that we ensure all body areas are covered.

Why is it important that I follow all of the above steps?

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

How should I look after my wound after surgery?

Before you leave the hospital we will give you a leaflet about how to care for your wound when you are at home.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the orthopaedic team advice line on **t:** 020 7188 4446, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. **t:** 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch. **t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. **t:** 111

NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing. **w:** www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

Was this leaflet useful?

We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you, fill in our simple online form, **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets, or **e:** patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk

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