

Using Chlorhexidine Cleanser Before Your Surgery

Your doctor has prescribed **chlorhexidine (CHG) cleanser** to use before your surgery. CHG is a skin cleanser that reduces the amount of germs on your skin after you use it. It is available as a liquid, sponge, or wipe.

This handout has instructions on how to shower with the cleanser **the night before AND morning of your surgery** to help lower your risk of an infection at the surgical site.

How do I shower with the CHG cleanser?

Shower with the CHG cleanser **the night before AND the morning of your surgery**:

- 1 Wash your face with **regular** soap, then rinse thoroughly.
- 2 If washing your hair, use **regular** shampoo, then rinse thoroughly. Do **NOT** use conditioner.
- 3 Wet the rest of your body, then **turn the water OFF**.
- 4 With the **CHG cleanser**, lather your whole body, from your neck to your feet, for 5 minutes. Make sure to lather your surgical site area, underarms, navel, and groin area with the cleanser (see Fig 1).

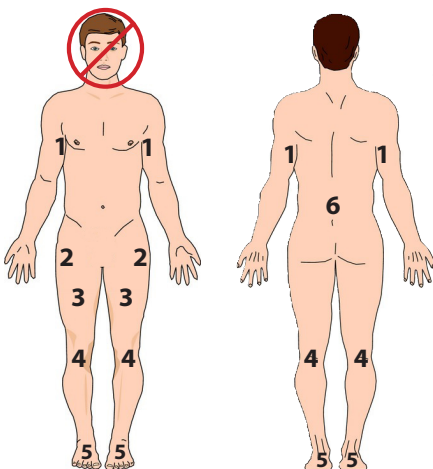


Fig 1. Put CHG cleanser on the suggested areas numbered.

When using the CHG cleanser:

- Do **NOT** use it on your head or face. **If the cleanser gets into your eyes, ears, or mouth, rinse with cold water right away.**
- Do **NOT** scrub too hard as this may irritate the skin. **If your skin becomes red or itchy, STOP using the CHG cleanser. Rinse well with warm water.**

- 5 Turn the water back on and rinse thoroughly.
- 6 Pat your skin dry with a clean towel.
- 7 Dress in clean clothes.

Do NOT:

- Shave the area we are operating on.
- Use creams, oils, or deodorants on your skin.
- Use grooming products on your hair.

Afterwards, get into clean bedding (you can switch your bedding to clean sheets before your shower).

On the morning of your surgery, **REPEAT** these CHG showering instructions. **If your skin reacted to the CHG, follow the instructions on page 2.**

Continued on back of page. Please turn over. 

What do I do if my skin reacts to the CHG cleanser?

If your skin turns red or itchy from the CHG cleanser:

- **STOP** using the cleanser and rinse well with warm water right away. Do **NOT** use the CHG cleanser again.
- On the morning of your surgery, take a **regular** shower:
 1. Wash your face **and body** with **regular** soap. Thoroughly rinse the soap off your face and body.
 2. Wash your hair with **regular** shampoo. Rinse your hair thoroughly. Do **NOT** use conditioner.
 3. Pat your skin dry with a clean towel.
 4. Dress in clean clothes.

Do NOT:

- Shave the area we are operating on.
 - Use creams, oils, or deodorants on your skin.
 - Use grooming products on your hair.
- **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.



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.

For more information, please contact your family doctor or nurse, or call:

**Infection Prevention and Control
Humber River Health**

Tel: (416) 242-1000 ext. 82400