

How to Cleanse Your Skin with Chlorhexidine Before OB/GYN Surgery

General Information

Washing your skin with chlorhexidine removes most of the bacteria (germs) that normally is found on your skin. This also helps prevent infection at the incision site.

You will need to take two showers before your surgery. **Please read all the instructions before cleansing your skin.**

Important

- Do not shave your body from your navel (belly button) to your upper thighs for 7 days before your surgery.
- Remove any body jewelry in your abdominal area 2 to 3 days before your surgery.
- Do not use chlorhexidine near your eyes, ears, mouth, or on your genital area.
- Keep the chlorhexidine solution away from children.
- You will need to sleep on freshly washed sheets after you cleanse your skin the night before your surgery.

Before Your Surgery

Purchase two 4-ounce bottles or one 8-ounce bottle (use half for each shower) of chlorhexidine gluconate 4% solution.

You can find this at most drugstores. A common brand name is Hibiclens®.

Some drugstores sell a kit that includes sponges and chlorhexidine gluconate 4% solution. This is another good option.

Warning

Do not use chlorhexidine wipes or liquid if you:

- are sensitive to surgery skin preps
- know you have an allergy to chlorhexidine.

If you notice your skin is irritated while using the chlorhexidine wipes or liquid, remove it by taking a shower or gently using a wet washcloth.

Tell your pre-surgery nurse you had a reaction so he or she can make a note of your allergy history and tell others on your health care team.

There are rare cases of this product causing a serious allergic reaction. This can occur within minutes of use. Call 911 if you have any of these:

- wheezing or difficulty breathing
- swelling of the face
- hives
- severe rash
- shock.

On the next page, you will find instructions on how to cleanse your skin.

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Night and Morning Before Surgery

You will need to take a shower the night before your surgery and the morning of your surgery to help reduce germs on your skin.

Follow these instructions on how to cleanse your skin when taking your two showers.

- Shampoo your hair and take a shower using your usual soap and shampoo.
- Rinse the shampoo and soap from your hair and body.
- Turn off the water and open the bottle.
- Use 4 ounces of the chlorhexidine liquid.
 - Pour the liquid onto your hands and apply it to your body.
 - If you have a chlorhexidine kit, use the sponge to apply the liquid to your body.
 - Do not use a washcloth to apply the liquid to your body. The antiseptic in chlorhexidine sticks to washcloth fibers.
 - Chlorhexidine may cause discoloration of towels and washcloths.
- Wash your entire body from your neck down to your feet. Be sure to wash your stomach and belly button well. (**Note:** Chlorhexidine does not foam or make suds.)
- After you wash your entire body from your neck down to your feet, wash your abdomen (especially the lower part of the stomach) gently for 3 minutes.
- Turn the water on and rinse your entire body.
- **Do not use regular soap, conditioner, oils, lotions, powders, deodorants, or sprays when you are done. This will decrease the effectiveness of the chlorhexidine.**
- When you are done, pat yourself dry with a clean, soft towel.
- Put on clean clothes or sleepwear.