

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 containing 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 any 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

In the **morning** of the day before your surgery you can wash, shower or bathe, and wash 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.

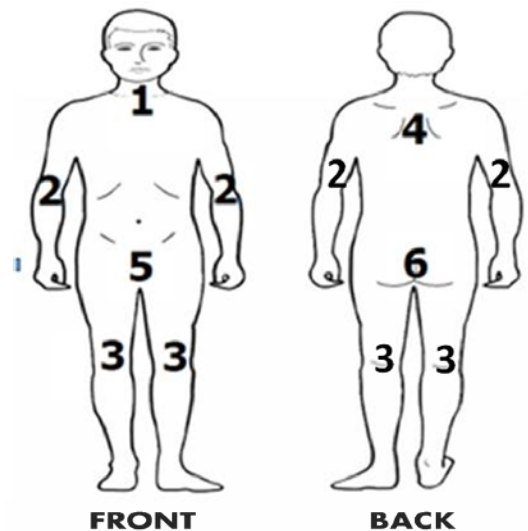
Directions for using the chlorhexidine cloths

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 the order shown in steps 1 to 6 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 the 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.



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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.

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 bodies, and are also present in our surroundings. Our skin prevents germs from entering our bodies. When your skin is cut by the surgeon during your operation, germs on the skin can enter into the body and cause what is known as a 'surgical wound infection'. Using the chlorhexidine cloth system properly will reduce the amount of bacteria on your skin that could potentially enter the cut. This may help to reduce the chances of you getting a wound infection.

How should I look after my wound following 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 department with which your surgery is booked by calling the switchboard on 020 7188 7188 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

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

Further information

Infection Prevention and Control Team

This is a team of specially trained team of nurses and doctors who advise doctors, nurses and other staff on how to prevent and control the spread of infection.

t: 020 7188 3153 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

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 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

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 Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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t: 0848 143 4017 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk

w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk