

# Preparing your skin before cardiac or vascular surgery using chlorhexidine gluconate skin preparations

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 surgery the nurse will give you a supply of chlorhexidine gluconate skin cleanser (Hibiscrub® Plus) and chlorhexidine gluconate cloths, which you need to use to prepare your skin before surgery.

Do not use the chlorhexidine solution or 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). Preparation should start two days before your planned date of surgery.

<b>Step 1</b>	Two days <b>before</b> surgery (when at home)	Stop routine shaving of your body
<b>Step 2</b>	One day <b>before</b> surgery	Morning – wash/shower or bathe normally Evening – use chlorhexidine solution to wash your whole body as instructed on page 2
<b>Step 3</b>	Morning of surgery	Use chlorhexidine cloths (these will be given to you on the morning of surgery) as instructed on page 3

## • 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: One day before your surgery

In 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 skin cleanser, 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 solution 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 skin cleanser (Hibiscrub® Plus)

1. Wash your face with undiluted chlorhexidine, especially around the nose (ensure you wet your skin first) **avoiding contact with your eyes and ears.**
2. Wet your skin ideally in the bath or shower.
3. Apply the chlorhexidine skin cleanser directly to the skin using a clean cloth or sponge paying particular attention to the armpits, groin and buttocks.
4. Leave the solution on the skin for about three minutes. **Do not expect the chlorhexidine to make foam and do not add any soap to the chlorhexidine.**
5. Rinse off the skin thoroughly.
6. Now repeat Steps 1 to 4 but this time starting with the hair.
7. After final rinse, dry with a clean towel.
8. Put on clean clothes.



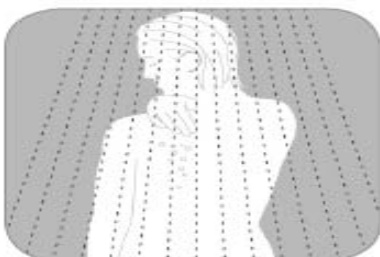
**1** Wash your face with undiluted **HiBi SCRUB PLUS**, especially around the nose, avoiding your eyes and ears.



**2** Using a clean sponge, working downwards, wash the armpits.



**3** Continue washing downwards and wash well around the groin area.



**4** After washing all these important areas, rinse off under the shower.



**5** Now repeat steps 1 to 4, but this time starting with the hair.



**6** After a final rinse, dry yourself thoroughly and put on clean 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.

### • **Step 3: On the morning of your surgery**

Skin preparation on the **morning of surgery** will be completed on the ward up to **two hours before surgery**.

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

### **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 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 fingertips. Be sure to thoroughly wipe the arm pit areas.

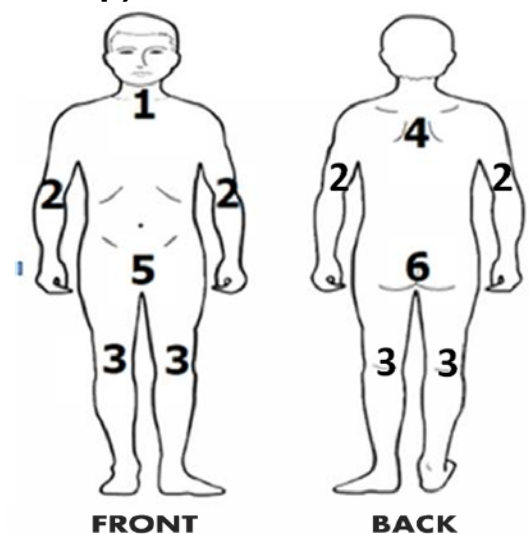
3. Wipe **both legs**, starting at the thigh and ending at the toes. Be sure to thoroughly wipe behind your knees.

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.



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.

As mentioned in the previous section, **do not** shower, bathe or shampoo hair once your skin preparation has begun.

## **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 preparation system on your skin properly will 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.

### **Allergic reactions**

There have been very rare reports of allergic reactions in patients who have used products containing chlorhexidine. In some cases these have been severe (anaphylaxis). If you experience any signs of allergy following use of the chlorhexidine skin cleanser, for example a rash, breathing difficulties, palpitations, or swelling of the lips, tongue and throat, or if you feel unwell in any way, please seek medical advice immediately. Let them know that you have used chlorhexidine skin cleanser recently, and take the bottle/packet with you if possible.

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## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the cardiac team advice line on 020 7188 1085 or 020 7188 0928 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

### 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

### 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](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

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

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto: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 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](http://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, and to become a member:

**t:** 0800 731 0319 **e:** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk) **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)