

# Chlorhex Skin Preparation – Patient Information

Thank you for choosing Calvary Hobart for your choice of hospital care. We are committed to your wellbeing.

There is a small risk of infection with any surgery. Calvary Hobart has a very low surgical site infection rate. We work hard to prevent infections, and want you to become involved in the prevention to better your health outcomes.

Because skin is not sterile, we need to be sure that your skin is as free from infection and microbes (germs) before your operation. We can reduce the number of microbes on your skin and decrease the risk of surgical site infections by preparing your skin with skin preparation solution called chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG). The instructions for use are to follow.

## What is CHG?

CHG is a chemical antiseptic wash that is effective on both gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria. It is both bacteriocidal (kills) and bacteriostatic (stops reproduction) of any bacteria on the skin. CHG can be found in many commonly used products such as mouthwash, contact lens solution, wound washout fluid, acne skin wash and topical skin cleansers, thus, we do not anticipate that using this soap will cause you skin irritation. However, we do encourage you to discuss any concerns or pre-existing skin conditions with your treating doctor before using the CHG wash. We do also recommend that if you suspect you have sensitive skin, and this wash may cause you problems, please conduct a test patch on a small area of your skin prior to whole body exposure, and report any concerns before continuing the usage, with your treating doctor.

## Should the whole body be bathed with the CHG wash or just the surgical site?

The CHG shower solution should be used prior to surgery and include the whole body from the neck down. You need to avoid exposure/contact with your eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Do not wash genital areas or scrub your scalp with CHG solution. You will only need to wash your hair with the solution if you're having brain or neck surgery, otherwise, use from the neck down only. Genital areas can be washed with antibacterial soap specifically designed for these areas if needed. If required, these types of soaps can be purchased from your local pharmacy.

## Getting your skin ready for surgery – Chlorhexidine solution shower

You may be instructed to shower the night before and the day of your surgery with the CHG solution.

Step 1: Wash your hair, face, body with your normal shampoo, conditioner and soap. Rinse completely.

Step 2: Turn off the shower or just step out of the running water.

Step 3: Pour a 50 cent piece size amount of the CHG solution onto your hand, and apply to your entire body from the neck down. REMEMBER, do not use CHG solution on your face or genital area. Only use it on your hair if you are having brain or neck surgery. Avoid any contact with any open cuts or wounds also.

You DO NOT need to scrub your body vigorously, just use it like a body wash.

Step 4: Turn on the shower or return under the running water and rinse the liquid wash off your body. Towel dry with a clean towel.

## POINTS to remember:

- **Do not use the Chlorhexidine shower wash if you are allergic to chlorhexidine.**
- Do not use the Chlorhexidine shower wash if you suspect you will have a reaction to it. Try a small amount of the back of your wrist and wait for 30 minutes to see if you have a reaction. If no reaction proceed with the wash.

Approved by: GM Lenah Valley and St Johns	Approved Date: 17/03/2020
UNCONTROLLED WHEN PRINTED	Review Date: 16/03/2023

- If when using the shower gel you have a skin or other reaction STOP using it immediately and rinse it off. These reactions may include, but not limited to severe burning, itching, redness, blistering, peeling, swelling, rash or any other severe irritation.
- If you are concerned for your health and well-being – please seek medical advice from Calvary Accident and Emergency Department (6278 5516) or if the reaction is severe or you experience anaphylaxis call an ambulance.
- Do NOT use the Chlorhexidine shower gel on any open cuts, wounds, your face, eyes, mouth, ears or **genital areas**.

**24 hours before your surgery:**

- Use clean towels and bedding after your shower
- Do not apply lotions or powders to your body
- Do not shave or remove any body hair below the neck (facial shaving is permitted).

**Reference**

Acknowledging the author, Karen Daly, Registered Nurse. Tasmanian Spinal Clinic.

MIMS online: Chlorhexidine preop wash 4% - [www.mims.com.au](http://www.mims.com.au)