

Skin Cleansing prior to Orthopedic or Spine Surgery

The bacteria that are normally found on your body can sometimes cause an infection in your incision after surgery. There are certain things you can do to decrease your risk of having an infection in your incision.

- It is important that you use Chlorhexidine (CHG) soap to shower each evening for three days prior to the day of your surgery. If you are allergic to Chlorhexidine, you can use an antibacterial soap to shower. (Dial or Safeguard for example)
- Chlorhexidine soap will help remove bacteria that you cannot see on your skin that could enter your incision and cause an infection.
- Because bacteria also live in your mouth, it is important that you brush your teeth regularly prior to your surgery. Use of an antiseptic mouthwash also helps decrease the amount of bacteria in your mouth. (Listerine etc.)
- Depending on what type of surgery you are having, your nurse may use a swab to remove bacteria from your nasal passages about an hour before your procedure. If you feel more comfortable doing this yourself, we will assist you. This involves using a swab with a product on it that kills bacteria, and putting it into your nostril and swirling it around. It is done twice in each nostril using a new swab each time. This is done to kill the bacteria in your nose that could increase your risk of infection.

What is Chlorhexidine Antimicrobial Skin Cleanser?

- It is a liquid soap that is stronger than regular soap.
- It is also called Hibiclens or Dyna-Hex.
- You may get it from your pharmacy or doctor's office when you schedule your procedure.
- It is important that you use this soap to shower each evening for three days prior to the day of your surgery.
- Do not use it above your chin (do not wash your face or hair with this soap) or use it directly on your genitals.

Each time you take a shower with the Chlorhexidine soap, please do the following:

1. Using a freshly laundered washcloth from home, wash your whole body in the shower, with an antibacterial soap (such as Dial or Safeguard). You may also wash your hair with your normal shampoo. Rinse off and do not use that wash cloth again.
2. Use 1/3 of a 4 oz. bottle of Chlorhexidine soap on a clean wet washcloth that was provided in the package with the soap.
3. Wash your knee, hip, back, neck etc. where you will be having surgery.
4. Scrub in circular motions. Be sure to get in all skin folds.
5. Continue washing your whole body, from your chin to your toes, ending with the groin area.
6. Turn the water off while scrubbing or move away from the shower spray to avoid rinsing the soap off.
7. Once you have completed the scrub, rinse the soap off your body completely.
8. After your shower is complete, pat yourself dry with a freshly washed towel. DO NOT apply any powder, deodorants or lotions. Dress with freshly washed clothing or pajamas.

This process should be followed each evening for the three days prior to the day of your surgery.

- Some common side effects of cleaning the skin with Chlorhexidine soap include itchiness, redness and irritation of the skin. These side effects are not considered to be serious, as they usually disappear quickly. However, if the skin irritation persists or gets worse, consult your doctor.

Do Not Use In Eyes, Ears or Mouth!

- If you develop a skin reaction, stop using immediately. If the reaction is severe, call your doctor. If Chlorhexidine, Hibiclens or Dyna-Hex is accidentally swallowed, contact the Poison Control Center immediately 1-800-221-1222 (Central PA). Keep out of the reach of children.