

# STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO REDUCE YOUR RISK OF A HOSPITAL INFECTION

**You will need to take two (2) showers with chlorhexidine soap (CHG) beginning the day before surgery.** Various brands can be bought in a pharmacy without a prescription. It will help remove any dangerous bacteria you may be carrying on your own skin. Hibiclens is one example of this type of soap.

CHG soap is simply any cleanser that contains the antibacterial chemical, chlorhexidine gluconate. Its biggest benefit is to reduce the numbers of bacteria that normally live on your skin. This will help to prevent any of these bacteria from getting into your surgical wound. If you are allergic to Chlorhexidine, use an antibacterial soap (such as Dial) for your shower.

## **Before you go to the hospital...**

*Cleansing Instructions:*

### **The night before surgery...**

1. Wash hair and body with regular shampoo and soap. Rinse off shampoo and soap completely.
2. Wash entire body from the neck down with the CHG soap. Do not allow CHG to get into eyes, nose, mouth, or mucous membranes. Use about 2 tablespoons (25 ml.) of the liquid for the entire body. Leave the CHG soap lather on the body for five minutes, gently scrubbing the body using a clean wash cloth each time you shower.
3. Do not wash with your regular soap after using CHG. Do not apply any lotions, perfumes or powders after using the CHG soap.
4. Put on clean clothes or pajamas and sleep on freshly laundered bed linens.



### **The morning of surgery...**

1. Repeat the steps 1-3 above.
2. Do not apply any lotions, perfumes or powders after using CHG the day of surgery.
3. Wear clean clothes to the hospital as it is important to keep the area around the surgical site clean.

### **Other Infection Reduction Tips:**

**Do not shave the surgical site.** Razors can create small nicks in the skin through which bacteria can enter. If hair must be removed before surgery, clippers will be used instead of a razor at the hospital. For other areas of the body, face, underarms, or legs, please consult your physician to see if shaving is restricted before surgery.

**Stop smoking well in advance of your surgery.** Patients who smoke are three times as likely to develop a surgical site infection as nonsmokers, and have significantly slower recoveries and longer hospital stays.



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## While you're in the hospital...

**Ask that hospital staff clean their hands before treating you, and ask visitors to clean their hands too.** This is the single most important way to protect you while in the hospital. If you're worried about being too aggressive, just remember your life could be at stake. All caregivers should clean their hands before touching you. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are more effective at removing most bacteria than soap and water. Do not hesitate to say: "Excuse me, but there's an alcohol dispenser right there. Would you mind using that before you touch me?" Don't be falsely assured by gloves. If caregivers have pulled on gloves without cleaning their hands first, the gloves are already contaminated before they touch you.

## After you return home...

**Maintain a clean environment.** After surgery you may spend more time in bed than usual. Place clean sheets on your bed to provide a safer environment for your body and surgical area by removing the old dead skin and bacteria that accumulate each night on your sheets. Also, remember to put on clean sleeping clothes when you return home for the same reasons.

**Continue to shower with chlorhexidine soap.** When your doctor tells you it's safe to shower, use the chlorhexidine soap as before surgery and continue for the next 3-5 days. Pat dry the incision area with a separate clean cloth.

**Keep the wound clean.** If your doctor instructs you to change your surgical dressing, wash your hands thoroughly before touching the dressing. If someone else is helping you, please ask them to clean their hands, as well. Remove the dressing, as directed, and place the old dirty dressing in a separate plastic bag and dispose. Then wash your hands again. It is important not to share the bacteria from the old dressing to the new dressing.

**Keep your surgical site clean and dry.** It is important to keep your surgical area clean and dry to prevent bacteria from growing and causing an infection. Do not pick at your incision. Maintain a covering over the surgical site as instructed by your doctor. Do not allow pets to lie on, or near, that area. Pets carry bacteria on them that might cause an infection in your surgical wound.

