



Using Chlorhexidine (CHG) Soap to Prevent Infection

UPMC in Central Pa.

Before surgery, it is important to clean your skin to reduce the risk of infection. Cleaning your skin and taking care of your oral health are 2 ways that you can help reduce your infection risk before and after surgery.

- Use chlorhexidine (CHG) soap to shower each evening for 3 days before the day of your surgery. Chlorhexidine soap will help remove bacteria that you cannot see on your skin that could enter your incision (cut) and cause an infection.
- Because bacteria also live in your mouth, brush your teeth at least twice a day for 1 week before your surgery. Using an antiseptic mouthwash (such as Listerine®) also helps to lower the amount of bacteria in your mouth.

What is chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) soap?

- Chlorhexidine (CHG) soap is a special soap to clean skin and protect against germs. It is a liquid soap that is stronger than regular soap.
- Using this soap can prevent infection before or after surgery.
- It is also sometimes called Hibiclens® or Dyna-Hex®.
- You can get it from your pharmacy or doctor's office when you schedule your procedure.

How is it used?

You will need:

- 2 clean washcloths
- Antibacterial soap, such as Dial® or Safeguard®
- 1 bottle (4 oz.) chlorhexidine (CHG) soap

1. Using the first washcloth, wash your whole body in the shower with an antibacterial soap (such as Dial or Safeguard). You may wash your hair with your normal shampoo.
2. Rinse and do not use that washcloth again.
3. Turn the water off or move away from the shower spray.



4. Pour 1/3 of a 4 oz. bottle of chlorhexidine soap onto the second clean, wet washcloth.
5. Wash the area where you will be having surgery.
6. Scrub in circular motions. Be sure to get in all skin folds.
7. Wash the rest of your body, from your chin to your toes, ending with the groin area. Do not use on your face, eyes, ears, mouth, or genitals.
8. Once you are finished, turn the shower back on, or move back under the spray and rinse the soap off your body completely.
9. After using the CHG soap, do not apply skin products such as lotion, powder, or deodorant.
10. Pat yourself dry with a freshly washed towel.
11. Dress in clean clothes.

What are possible side effects of CHG soap?

- Your skin may feel sticky or even itchy. That feeling should go away after your skin dries.
- If you have continued itchiness, burning, redness, or other allergy symptoms, please contact your doctor.
- If you are allergic to chlorhexidine, you can use an antibacterial soap like Dial or Safeguard to shower.

Keep out of the reach of children.

If chlorhexidine soap is accidentally swallowed, contact the Poison Control Center immediately
1-800-221-1222 (Central Pa.).