

# Preoperative Chlorhexidine Soap Bathing Instructions

When having surgery there are steps you can take to reduce your risk of getting a surgical site infection. Your skin contains germs that live there every day. We're able to live with these germs because our skin acts as a barrier. When your skin barrier is broken with a surgical incision, it is easier for you to get an infection.

To protect yourself, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), recommends showering with a special soap before surgery. This soap contains an ingredient called chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) that reduces the number of germs on your skin. This soap will be given to you or you can purchase it at a local drugstore (call ahead to ask if it's in stock). If possible, shower with CHG soap, rather than taking a tub bath. Science tells us that a shower gets rid of more germs.

**\*Soap is for use only on the skin. DO NOT DRINK.**

Keep out of reach of children.

## Showering Instructions

1. **DO NOT** shave or wax near the area of surgery for at least 48 hours before the day of your surgery.
2. On the night before your surgery, shower with CHG. Shower again before coming to the hospital.
3. Wash your hair as usual with your own shampoo.
4. Turn the water off to prevent rinsing off the CHG soap early.
5. **From the neck down**, apply the CHG soap with your hands. Cover your entire body. Pay close attention to the area where your surgery will be performed and any skin folds or creases. It's important that you wash your entire body, not just the area where the surgical incision(s) will be. **DO NOT** put the CHG on your face, or near eyes, ears or mouth. For females, avoid the vaginal area. It can cause irritation and permanent damage of these delicate areas.
6. Have someone wash any parts of your body that are difficult to reach. Hard-to-reach parts may be your back, legs and feet.
7. Continue to lather and wash your body for five minutes. **DO NOT** scrub your skin too hard as you wash, and don't wash your body with regular soap after the CHG.
8. Turn the water on and rinse thoroughly, then pat yourself dry with a clean, fresh towel.
9. **Do not put any lotions, powders, etc., on your skin.** These could keep the CHG from killing the germs on your skin.
10. Put on clean underwear and clothing.

