

Preparing Your Skin Before Open Heart Surgery

If you have any questions about these instructions, call:

Halifax Infirmary Day Surgery

- › Phone: 902-473-3187
- › Hours: 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Monday to Friday)

Preparing Your Skin Before Open Heart Surgery

You will get a package of cloths before your surgery. The cloths are moistened with 2% chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG). CHG cleans and gets your skin ready for surgery.

Do not open the package until you are ready to use the cloths.

2 days before your surgery:

- **Do not** shave any part of your body, including your face, your legs, or under your arms. Shaving before you apply 2% CHG may cause redness or make your skin itch.
- You may shower or bathe as usual.

The night before your surgery:

- Shower or bathe using soap and a clean towel.

Do not use personal care products (like lotions, moisturizers, or makeup).

These products can weaken the CHG in the wipes.

- **1 hour after your shower or bathe**, use 3 CHG cloths to clean your skin. Follow the instructions on the next page.
- Your skin should be completely dry and cool before applying CHG.
- **Do not** let the cloth touch your eyes, ears, or mouth.
- **Do not** shower or bathe after using the CHG cloths.

CHG works best when left on the skin. **Let the CHG dry fully. Do not rinse off.**

If you have sensitive skin, CHG may cause itching and/or redness. Showering or shaving right before using CHG wipes may make this worse. If itching or redness does not go away, rinse the irritated areas with warm water and stop using the wipes. **Do not** use hot water.

- If the package has more than 3 cloths, re-seal it so the other cloths do not dry out.

Instructions for using CHG cloths:

1. Using the 1st cloth:

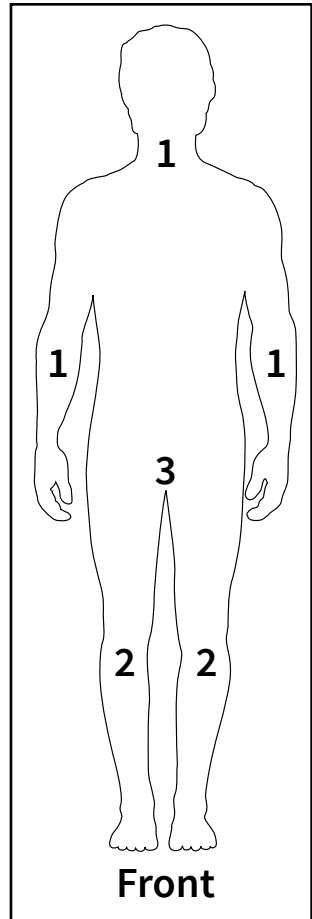
- Gently wipe your neck and chest.
 - › Start at your chin and end at your belly button.
 - › Make sure to wipe from shoulder to shoulder.
- **Still using the 1st cloth,** wipe both arms.
 - › Start at your shoulder and end at your fingertips.

2. Using the 2nd cloth:

- Gently wipe the inside and front of both legs.
 - › Start at your ankle and wipe towards your groin.

3. Using the 3rd cloth:

- Gently wipe your groin.
 - › Make sure you wipe between any skin folds (not inside your genitals).
- After using the 3 cloths, let your skin dry for **1 minute**.



- **Do not** rinse any part of your skin. Your skin may feel sticky for a few minutes after using the cloths. This is normal. It will go away as the CHG dries.
- Dress in clean clothes.

The morning of your surgery:

- **Do not** shower or bathe.
- Repeat the steps from the night before using 3 new CHG cloths. Follow the same instructions on the previous page.

Remember:

- Follow the instructions on page 3 to get your skin ready for surgery.
- **Do not** let the cloths touch your eyes, ears, or mouth.
- Your skin will feel sticky for a few minutes after the CHG is applied.
- If you have any questions, call the number on the front cover of this pamphlet.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Prepared by: Cardiovascular Surgery
Illustration by: LifeART Super Anatomy 4 Images, Copyright © 1994,
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WG85-1574 © October 2024 Nova Scotia Health Authority
To be reviewed October 2027 or sooner, if needed.