

# Preparing Your Skin Before Orthopaedic Surgery

**If you have any questions about these instructions, please call:**

Halifax Infirmary Day Surgery

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

# Preparing Your Skin Before Orthopaedic Surgery

## 2 days before your surgery:

- You will get a package of cloths to clean your skin before surgery. The cloths are pre-moistened with 2% chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG). CHG is a liquid that kills germ (bacteria) and keeps more germs from growing. CHG is used to clean and prepare your skin before surgery.
- **Do not open the package until you are ready to use the cloths.**
- Do not shave your legs, back, or under your arms. Shaving before you apply 2% Chlorhexidine Gluconate (CHG) may make your skin red or itchy. You can shave your face, if needed. Electric razors are the best choice.
- You may continue to bathe or shower as usual until the night before surgery (see page 2).

When applied to sensitive skin, CHG may cause skin irritation, such as a temporary itching feeling and/or redness. Showering or shaving right before applying CHG may make this worse. If itching or redness doesn't go away, rinse the itchy/red areas with warm (**not hot**) water and stop using CHG.

**If you have a package of more than 3 cloths, make sure to re-seal the package so the other cloths do not dry out.**

## Night before surgery instructions:

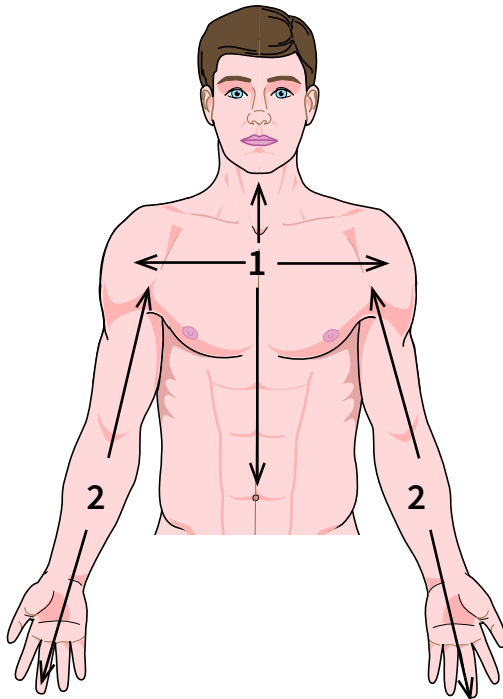
- Shower or bathe using soap and a clean towel.
- Your skin should be completely dry and cool before applying CHG.
- **Do not let the cloth touch your eyes, ears, or mouth.**
- On the morning of your surgery, follow the instructions on the next few pages to prepare your skin.
- After you use the CHG cloths, do not shower or bathe. CHG works best when left on the skin. **Let the CHG dry completely. DO NOT RINSE OFF.**
- **Do not use lotions, moisturizers, or makeup.** Water and ingredients commonly found in personal care products can lower the cleansing effects of CHG.
- Follow any other pre-surgery instructions your health care team has given you. This pamphlet is only about your skin preparation before surgery.

### You are having the following orthopaedic surgery:

- Upper body other than your back  
(see page 3)
- Lower body (see page 4)
- Foot and ankle (see page 5)
- Back (see page 6)

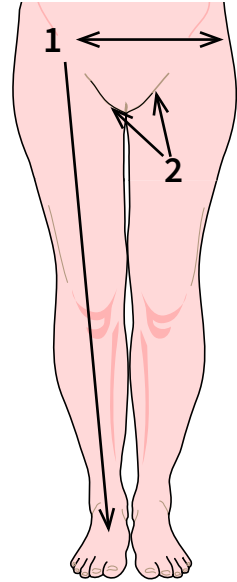
**For all upper body orthopaedic surgeries (except surgery on your back – see page 6), use CHG cloths on these areas:**

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.
  2. **Using the 2nd cloth:**
    - › Gently wipe both arms:
    - › Start at your shoulder and end at your fingertips.
- After using the 2 cloths, let your skin dry for 1 minute.
  - **Do not rinse any part of your skin.** It is normal for the skin to feel sticky for a few minutes after the CHG is applied.
  - Dress in clean clothes.



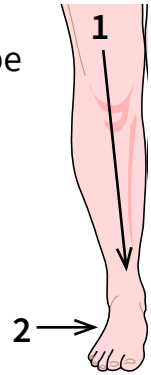
**For all lower body orthopaedic surgeries, use CHG cloths on these areas:**

- 1. Using the 1st cloth**, gently wipe the side, front and back of your leg including your hip.
    - › Start at your hip and wipe towards your ankle.
  - 2. Using the 2nd cloth**, gently wipe your groins.
    - › Make sure you wipe in any skin folds (not inside genitals).
- After using the 2 cloths, let your skin dry for 1 minute.
  - **Do not rinse any part of your skin.** It is normal for the skin to feel sticky for a few minutes after the CHG is applied.
  - Dress in clean clothes.



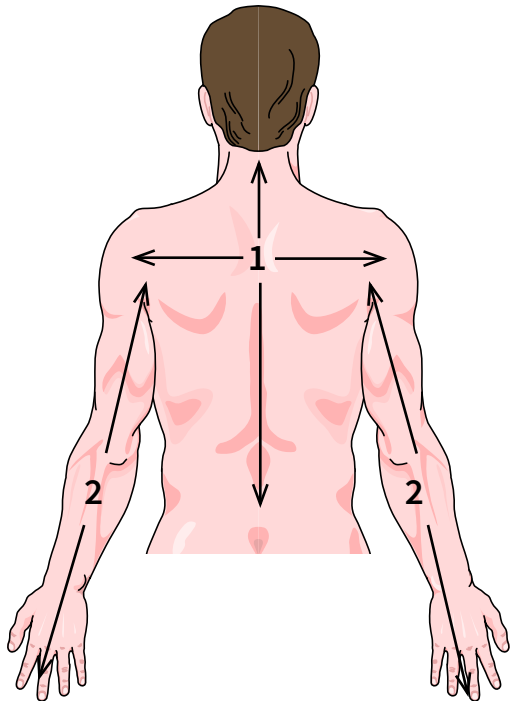
**For all foot and ankle surgeries, use CHG cloths on these areas:**

- 1. Using the 1st cloth,** start at the knee of the leg that will be operated on, and gently wipe the front and back of the lower leg to the ankle.
  - 2. Using the 2nd cloth,** gently wipe your foot.
- After using the 2 cloths, let your skin dry for 1 minute.
  - **Do not rinse any part of your skin.** It is normal for the skin to feel sticky for a few minutes after the CHG is applied.
  - Dress in clean clothes.



**For all back surgeries, please get help from someone at home. Use CHG cloths on these areas:**

- 1. Using the 1st cloth**, have someone gently wipe your shoulders and back:
    - › Start at the hairline of your neck and end at your buttocks (bum).
    - › Make sure to wipe from shoulder to shoulder.
  - 2. Using the 2nd cloth**, wipe both arms:
    - › Start at your shoulder and end at your fingertips.
- After using the 2 cloths, let your skin dry for 1 minute.
  - **Do not rinse any part of your skin.** It is normal for the skin to feel sticky for a few minutes after the CHG is applied.
  - Dress in clean clothes.



## **Reminders**

- Avoid contact with your eyes, ears, and mouth.
- It is normal for the skin to feel sticky for a few minutes after the CHG cloths are applied.

# Notes:

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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.

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

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