Preparing your skin before surgery

Introduction

This leaflet explains why we ask you to use chlorhexidine skin cleanser and how to use it for the best effect before surgery. It also tells you about the risks involved with using the skin cleanser that you should be aware of.

Why do I need to use chlorhexidine skin cleanser?

It is important to prepare your skin before surgery to make sure that your skin is as clean as it can be and to reduce the amount of bacteria that is normally found on the skin. Cleaning your skin with this chlorhexidine cleanser may also help reduce the risk of you having a wound infection after surgery.

When you come to the hospital for your pre-assessment appointment, the nurse will give you a bottle of chlorhexidine skin cleanser HiBiScrub Plus®. Please follow the instructions for using it carefully so that you do not use more than you should, or more often than advised on the label.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>The evening before your surgery</th>
<th>Wash your face and hair using the soap and shampoo you normally use. Then use the chlorhexidine solution to wash your whole body and your hair. Put on clean night clothes and sleep in clean sheets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>The morning of your surgery</td>
<td>Use the chlorhexidine solution to wash your whole body, not hair. Put on clean clothes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to use the chlorhexidine gluconate skin cleanser (HiBiScrub Plus®)

You can use the chlorhexidine (HiBiScrub Plus®) while taking a shower, a bath or a wash at the sink. Please follow these steps:

1. Wash your face with undiluted (full strength) HiBiScrub Plus®, especially around the nose, avoiding your eyes and ears
2. Using a clean cloth, wash using undiluted HiBiScrub Plus®, work downwards from your neck, paying attention to the armpits, groin and buttocks, and any skin folds in the stomach. Be careful not to use on genitals, ears, eyes or mouth (known as mucous membranes) as chlorhexidine can cause irritation to these more sensitive areas
3. Try to leave the solution on the skin for 3 minutes
4. After washing all of these important areas rinse off in the shower or bath, or by using a flannel (if washing at a sink) with clean water
5. Repeat the process but this time start with your hair if you are able to. If you are not able to wash your hair, please use the HiBiScrub Plus® around your hairline
6. After a final rinse, dry thoroughly with a clean towel.

Do not use the HiBiScrub Plus® on any wounds or areas of broken skin.

Allergic reactions

There have been reports of allergic reactions in patients who have used products containing chlorhexidine. In rare cases these have been severe requiring urgent medical assistance. Please seek medical advice if you notice any signs of allergy after using chlorhexidine skin cleanser such as:

- a rash
- breathing difficulties
- swelling of the lips, tongue and throat.

Advice can be sought from your GP or NHS 111.

In an emergency please contact the Emergency Services Tel: 999. It is important to tell the doctor or nurse that you have recently used a chlorhexidine skin cleanser and take the bottle with you if possible.
Contact information

If you have any queries about these instructions please contact the pre-assessment clinic that you attended and ask to speak to the specialist nurses for your type of surgery.

**NHS 111**
Tel: 111

This is the NHS non-emergency number. A trained adviser will ask you a series of questions to assess your symptoms and immediately direct you to the best medical care for you. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Content reviewed: November 2016