

Showering Instructions Before Cardiac Surgery

You can play an important role in your own health by following these showering instructions before surgery. Your skin isn't sterile, so it's important to make it as clean as possible. We will use an antiseptic (a cleaning product that prevents germ growth) on your skin before the surgery, and it will work better if your skin is clean.

How do I get the special soap needed for showering?

To clean your skin before surgery, use an antibacterial soap with chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG), such as BactoShield® or Hibiclens®. We will give you a bottle of this soap at your clinic visit before surgery, or you can buy it at your local pharmacy without a prescription.

If you are allergic to CHG soap, do not use it. Tell your surgeon or nurse about your allergy. They will recommend another antibacterial soap for you, like Dial®, Lever®, or Safeguard® (in the form of body wash or a new bar of soap).

What are my showering instructions before surgery?

Shower every day for 5 days before your surgery to clean your skin. You should also shower the night before and the morning of your surgery.

Do's:

- ✓ Use a clean, freshly laundered washcloth and towel each time you shower.
- ✓ Change your bedsheets to clean, freshly laundered linens when you start using the CHG soap.

Don'ts:

- ✗ Do not shave your chest or groin (the area where your thigh meets your belly) before surgery.
- ✗ Do not use rough scrub brushes, loofah sponges, or mesh shower puffs.

Follow these steps for each shower:

1. Wash your face with regular soap. Do not use CHG soap on your face.
2. Wash your hair with your normal shampoo and rinse your hair. Do not use CHG soap on your hair.
3. Wash your body from your neck to your feet with CHG soap and a clean, freshly laundered washcloth. Do the following:
 - First wash the area where you will have surgery (such as your chest and groin).
 - Then wash your neck, underarms, breasts, feet, groin, and skin folds. Also, make sure to clean carefully under your fingernails.
 - Do not use CHG soap on your genital area (“private parts”).
 - Use gentle friction to clean your skin. Do not scrub hard.
4. **Leave the CHG soap on your skin for 1-2 minutes to kill bacteria.**
5. Rinse the CHG soap completely off your body with warm water.
6. Gently pat your skin dry with a clean, freshly laundered towel.
7. Put on clean, freshly laundered clothes after each shower.

On the night before and morning of your surgery:

- Do not use deodorant, antiperspirant, lotions, creams, powders, makeup, or perfume on your skin, hair, or face.
- Wear clean, freshly laundered, loose-fitting clothes on the day of your surgery.

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