



A lifetime of specialist care

Royal Brompton & Harefield **NHS**  
NHS Foundation Trust

Royal Brompton Hospital

# Your pre-operative skin wash





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*This leaflet gives you general information about your pre-operative skin wash. It does not replace the need for personal advice from a healthcare professional. Please ask us if you have any questions.*

## What does the skin do?

The skin is the body's first line of defence. It prevents bacteria from entering the body and causing infection. The skin is covered with natural organisms that live on the skin of a healthy person. We also come into contact

with other organisms, such as bacteria, every day. This is normal, and with good hygiene activities like bathing, showering and handwashing, we can reduce the chance of getting or passing on an infection.

## Why is a pre-operative skin wash necessary?

The use of a pre-operative skin wash has been shown to help reduce the risk of infection when used before procedures and operations. When the skin is broken, for example, when it is cut, grazed or pierced, the protection against organisms is reduced. This means there is a chance that bacteria may enter

and an infection may occur. Although it is necessary to break the skin for a surgical or catheter procedure (placing a thin, flexible tube through the skin), this is carried out in a sterile manner to reduce the risk of infection. The use of a pre-operative skin wash helps to reduce this risk further still.

## Who needs a pre-operative skin wash?

All patients having the following procedures will require a pre-operative wash:

- All cardiothoracic surgery via sternotomy (chest) or thoracotomy (side) incision.
- Portacath – a soft plastic medical device placed under the skin so that treatments can be given into a vein.
- Pacemaker – a device that helps the heart to beat at a normal rate.
- Implantable cardioverter defibrillator – a small device that helps when there is an abnormal heart beat.
- Loop recorder – an implanted heart monitoring device.

- Cardiac catheterisation – a thin, flexible tube that is placed into a vein to help diagnose or treat heart conditions.
- Chest drain – a thin, flexible tube used to remove fluid or air.

## When does the wash happen?

- All cardiothoracic surgery and pacemaker insertion patients will have two pre-operative washes – one on the evening before surgery and one in the morning shortly before surgery.
- Patients for drain insertion, portacath insertion and cardiac catheter will have one wash on the day of the procedure.
- Your nurse or nursery nurse will provide you with the wash, remind you of instructions and answer any questions you may have. We will also ensure you have a fresh gown and linen after each wash.

## What is the wash?

Royal Brompton Hospital provides patients with Hydrex® Surgical Scrub Chlorhexidine 4% Skin Cleanser. This is an antiseptic solution containing chlorhexidine gluconate, methylated spirit and water. The solution removes micro-organisms from the skin, ensuring skin protection long

after application. Its prolonged antimicrobial effect prevents re-accumulation of micro-organisms. Antimicrobial means the solution works against infection-causing organisms, such as bacteria. It also contains emollients (softeners) to help keep the skin moist and protected.

## Is it safe to use?

Hydrex® Surgical Scrub Chlorhexidine 4% Skin Cleanser is licensed for use on children and uses only low concentrations of chlorhexidine, so is safe to use for most patients.

Please note that Hydrex® Surgical Scrub Chlorhexidine 4% Skin Cleanser should not be used:

- For infants under 38 weeks gestational (pregnancy) age
- When there is an underlying skin condition
- When there is a known allergy to chlorhexidine
- On broken skin or open wounds

If needed we will provide an alternative suitable wash product.

## Instructions for use

1. Your nurse or nursery nurse will provide you with the pre-operative wash. Your baby or child will be given 25ml or 50ml of the wash depending on their age and size. We will also provide you with washcloths if you do not have your own, and adhesive remover to remove any plaster / sticker residue.
2. The wash should be applied directly onto wet skin (do not dilute before applying).
3. If your child needs a bed bath or assisted strip wash, please do not add the solution to the water as this makes it too diluted to be effective.
4. Apply to all areas of the body.
5. Work into a lather / foam, taking care not to get it in the eyes or ears and leave for at least one minute. Please pay close attention to the following areas:
  - The incision or insertion site: this will vary depending on the



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procedure – your nurse or nursery nurse will explain this to you

- Areas where intravenous access (a thin plastic tube) is placed into a vein such as your child's groin or neck
  - Groin and underarms – these are areas of warmth and moisture and a common site for bacterial growth
6. Rinse off and dry thoroughly with a clean fresh towel.

## Please note:

- Chlorhexidine is for external use only
- Avoid contact with eyes and ears – if this happens rinse immediately with cold water
- Reactions to chlorhexidine are uncommon but if any abnormal signs appear (red, irritated or sore skin), please tell your nurse immediately

## For further information

If you have any further questions, please speak to your bedside nurse or nursery nurse.

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If you have concerns about any aspect of the service you have received in hospital and feel unable to talk to those people responsible for your care, call PALS on 020 7349 7715 or email [pals@rbht.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@rbht.nhs.uk). This is a confidential service.

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إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على ترجمة فورية لمضمون هذه الوثيقة إلى اللغة العربية، يرجى منك الاتصال بأحد مستخدمينا بجناح المصلحة التي يتم فيها استشفائك. أحد موظفينا سيسعى لترتيب إجراءات الترجمة وإتمامها في الوقت المناسب لك.

Brosurteki bilginin Türkçe tercemesi için tedavi görüyor olduğunuz bölüme bas vurunuz. Bölüm personeli tercemenin gerçekleşmesini en kısa zamanda ayarlayacaktır.

