

Cleaning Your Skin Before Your Surgery at University Health Network (UHN)

Information for patients and families

You play an important role in your own health.

Before your surgery, **you must shower or bathe at home** to clean your skin and reduce your chance of infection after your surgery.



Why is cleaning my skin before my surgery important?

Your skin is not sterile so **you will need to clean your skin well before your surgery**. Your surgical team will make sure that your surgery is done under sterile (germ-free) conditions. The antiseptic used to prepare your skin for surgery will work better if your skin is clean.

What should I use to clean my skin?

To clean your skin before surgery, shower or bathe with:

- **Soap**
or
- An **antiseptic soap**. Your surgeon may have asked you to buy chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) antiseptic soap (also known as Stanhexidine, Endure 420 Cida-Stat or Chlorhexidine Wash 2%).
 - You do not need a prescription to get this kind of soap
 - You can buy this soap at the **Toronto General Outpatient Pharmacy or Toronto Western Hospital Shoppers Drug Mart**

If you are allergic to any of these products, do not use them and tell your surgeon or nurse right away.

How many times must I shower or bathe before my surgery?

To prepare your skin for surgery, you must shower or bathe at least 2 times:

1. The evening before your surgery
2. The day of your surgery.

How should I clean my skin in the shower or bath?



Getting ready

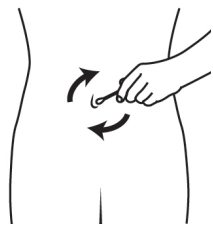
Use soft and clean, freshly washed washcloths and towels for each shower or bath.



Remove all jewelry and body piercings.



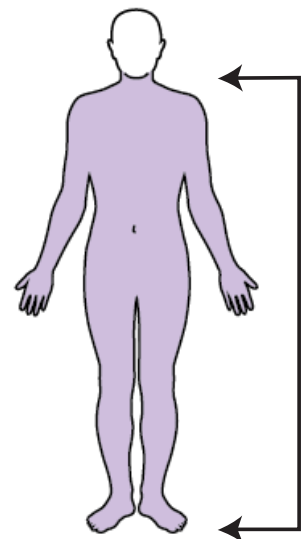
Wash your hair with your normal shampoo each time you shower or bathe.



Clean your belly button well with a cotton swab before you bathe or shower.

Using the soap

- If you are using soap, use it as you normally would.
- Only use CHG soap **below the neck**:
 - × **Do not** use it on your hair or scalp
 - × **Do not** use it on your face or in your ears



Only use CHG soap
below the neck

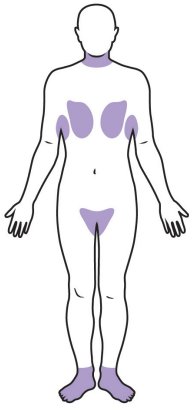
Cleaning your skin



To remove dirt, **gently** rub your skin with a washcloth or soft sponge.



If your surgery will be on your back, have someone wash your back or use a soft bristled, long handled brush to clean your back. Use gently. Do not scrub your skin.



Wash your neck, underarms, breasts, feet, groin and skin-fold areas well.

Rinse your body well after washing.

Do not:

- × **Do not** shave the area of your body where your surgery will be done.
- × **Do not** use a rough scrub brush and do not scrub your skin.
- × **Do not** get any soap in your eyes, ears and mouth.
- × **Do not** use lotion, cream, powder or perfume after washing.

On the day of your surgery

- You can use deodorant unless your surgeon or nurse has asked you not to.
- Wear clean clothes to the hospital.

Who can I talk to if I have any questions about showering or bathing before my surgery?

If you have questions or concerns about showering, bathing or cleaning your skin before your surgery, please talk to your surgeon or nurse right away.



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