



Showering With Antimicrobial Soap Before Your Surgery

Prevention of surgical wound infection is important to your recovery. One of the ways you can help prevent infection is by bathing/showering with an antimicrobial soap before your surgery.

Bottles of antimicrobial soap (Hibiclens) soap should be purchased at your local pharmacy and does not require a prescription. Showering with Hibiclens before surgery may lower your risk for infection by reducing the germs on your skin.

- ✓ Use the Hibiclens soap on the two days before and the day of your operation (i.e., once a day for 3 days).
- ✓ Use Hibiclens soap *instead* of your regular soap-do not use both, as this dilutes the effect of Hibiclens.
- ✓ Hibiclens soap does not lather as well as regular soap. Using a sponge can help with lathering.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

DO NOT USE Hibiclens:

- If you have an allergy to chlorhexidine-containing products.
- On your head or face (if you get this soap into your eyes flush with water)
- On the vaginal area.



SHOWERING INSTRUCTIONS:

These instructions will differ from the instructions on the Hibiclens package. Package instructions are meant for surgeons using this product as a skin antiseptic prior to performing the surgical procedure. Please use the following instructions for showering:

1. Rinse your body thoroughly with water first.
2. Turn the water off to prevent rinsing the Hibiclens soap off too soon.
3. Wash from the neck downwards. Be especially careful to wash the part of your body (abdomen) where your operation will be performed. Be sure to get in your belly button – you can use a Q-Tip to help with this.
4. Wash your body gently for five (5) minutes. Do not scrub your skin too hard. You can use a sponge to help with lathering.
5. Turn water back on, rinse well and pat dry with a clean towel.
6. Do not apply powder, lotion, deodorant or hair products after the third shower.
7. Do not shave the area of your body where your surgery will be performed. Shaving increases your risk of infection.

Allergic reactions and skin reactions are rare, but can occur. If you develop a rash or skin irritation, please contact your physician. If you develop an allergic reaction involving hives or difficulty breathing, call 911 or report to your nearest emergency department.



Preventing Wound Infections After Surgery

What is a wound infection?

A wound infection is an infection that occurs after surgery in the part of the body where the surgery took place. Most patients who have surgery do not develop an infection. Some of the symptoms of a wound infection are:

- Redness and pain around the area where you had surgery
- Drainage of cloudy fluid coming from the wound
- Fever

Can wound infections be treated?

Yes, most wound infections can be treated with antibiotics. Some patients may need additional surgery to treat the infection.

What is Mass General doing to prevent this type of infection?

At Mass General, we:

- ✓ Clean our hands and arms with an antimicrobial soap (one that kills germs) just before the surgery.
- ✓ Clean our hands before and after caring for each patient.
- ✓ May remove hair in the area of the procedure just before your surgery using electric clippers.
- ✓ Follow sterile procedures during surgery to keep the area clean.
- ✓ When recommended, give you antibiotics just before your surgery starts; and then stop antibiotics 24 hours after surgery.
- ✓ Clean the skin in the area of the procedure with an antimicrobial soap just before the surgery.

How can I help prevent a wound infection?

Before your surgery:

- Tell your doctor about other medical problems you may have, such as allergies or diabetes.
- Stop smoking. Patients who smoke get more infections. Talk to your primary care provider about how you can quit before surgery.
- Do not shave your abdomen or near where you will have surgery. Shaving with a razor can irritate your skin and make it easier to develop an infection.
- Shower or bathe with an antimicrobial soap the evening before surgery. Any soap marked “antimicrobial” is fine.
- You may receive specific instructions on bathing from your doctor, such as using a certain kind of soap.

After your surgery

- Visitors should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol hand rub before and after visiting you. They should not touch your wound or bandage.
- Before you go home, your doctor or nurse will explain how to care for your wound. Ask your doctor or nurse if you have questions.