

Decolonization of Non-ICU Patients With Devices

Section 14-8 – Talking Points for Chlorhexidine Bathing

Patients may have questions regarding chlorhexidine (CHG) bathing. Below are some suggested responses to common patient questions.

REMEMBER: Your **enthusiasm** and **encouragement** will be the greatest predictors of a patient's acceptance of the protocol.

Why do I need to bathe with CHG?

This is your protective bath while in the hospital. We provide a chlorhexidine, or CHG, bath to all patients with medical devices to prevent infection. CHG is deeply cleansing and works better than regular soap and water to remove germs and protect you from infection. It has been used on millions of patients in hospitals across the country to clean the skin and protect them from germs.

Why is CHG used for patients with devices?

The **A**ctive **B**athing to **E**liminate (ABATE) Infection trial was a large clinical study in patients with select medical devices where CHG reduced bloodstream infections and antibiotic resistant bacteria. Our hospital is committed to protecting you from infection and this is one proven strategy that we use.

How do you know it works better than regular soap?

We are using the chlorhexidine soap because, in large clinical trials in U.S. hospitals, it has been proven to get rid of germs and prevent infections. For patients with medical devices, CHG reduced bloodstream infections by over 30 percent, and it reduced some antibiotic-resistant bacteria by nearly 40 percent.

I am too tired and I don't feel like bathing.

I understand that you must be tired, but this bath is important to protect you from bacteria and other germs. It will only take 5 to 10 minutes and will make you feel refreshed. I will help you. If you are too tired right now, we can find a better time and I can come back later.

I don't think I can bathe because I have an IV (or other device).

This CHG bath is designed specifically for patients with devices. Because you have a device, it's even more important to keep germs off the skin to prevent infection. We actually clean the lines and devices with CHG after we clean your skin. I will help you apply the CHG over the dressing and on the device itself to make sure that everything on or near your body is clean.

I don't feel clean after bathing with cloths. I'd prefer soap and water.

I know we usually think of baths as having soapy water, but these CHG cloth baths work better than soap and water to remove germs from the skin. In fact, CHG continues to kill germs for up to 24 hours after the bath. It is deeply cleansing, and clinical studies have proven that it prevents infection better than soap and water.

Why do these cloths leave my skin feeling sticky?

The sticky feeling is temporary and is due to lotion or aloe vera in the cloths, which moisturizes your skin while it cleans. These moisturizers cause a brief sticky feeling that goes away completely when dry. After a few minutes, you'll find that it leaves your skin soft without any stickiness.

Can I use the CHG soap on wounds or skin rashes?

Yes. In fact, cleaning skin wounds and rashes is particularly important since germs can get into the body when there is a skin break. I will help you with that part of your bath.

Can I use my own soap and/or lotions along with this bath?

No, other soaps and lotions may prevent CHG from working. Many soaps and lotions can interfere with the germ-fighting ingredient. This bath works better than soap and water to protect you, so it is important that you only use the soap and lotions that we give you during your stay.

I would prefer to use my own shampoo and face soap. Is this OK?

Other soaps and shampoos may interfere with the CHG ingredient that works to remove germs from your body. We strongly encourage you to use only CHG while you are here. CHG can be used as both a soap and a shampoo. However, if you prefer to use your own shampoo or face soap, please use them first and try to keep the shampoo and face wash off of the body so CHG will work when applied as body soap.

I would prefer to perform my own bed bath. Is this OK?

If you wish to bathe yourself, let me give you a handout with important instructions ("Bathe Daily With Chlorhexidine Cloths"). Remember to read the instructions carefully, as the bath may not protect you if it is not done correctly. The CHG cloths have a special no-rinse soap that works better than soap and water to remove germs that can cause infection. Massage the skin well with the cloths to remove skin germs. Just let it air dry. Do not rinse off the CHG since the CHG continues to work for 24 hours to keep germs away. Don't forget to clean all skin areas, including the neck and between and under skin folds. Most patients need some help. I can help you with any hard to reach areas as well as help you clean on and around your lines or drains.

The label for liquid CHG says it can be used for routine bathing (skin, wound, and general skin cleansing), but CHG cloths are labeled as preoperative. Is it okay to use the cloths for routine bathing?

Yes, both CHG liquid and CHG cloths are safe to use for routine bathing. The cloths are labeled based upon the original studies performed by the manufacturer to market the product. Since then, many large clinical trials have now shown that routine CHG bathing reduces serious infections, even in critically ill patients. The manufacturer came to this hospital to help train the staff on use of this product for routine bathing based upon these trials. In fact, nearly all U.S. hospitals now use CHG as their soap for routine bathing of ICU patients. This type of routine bath has been used in millions of patients and is well-tolerated and safe. Our goal is to prevent infection and protect you while you are here.

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