

Care in the Hospital: CHG Bathing

While you're in the hospital, your care team may ask you to bathe with CHG, or chlorhexidine gluconate.

CHG is a special antiseptic that reduces the risk of an infection, including at the surgical site and where a CVAD— also known as a central I.V. line—may be.

CHG can prevent any bacteria on your skin from getting into your body.

The CHG you will be given to use may be in a bottle as a liquid, or you may be given CHG disposable wipes.

The labels will usually say chlorhexidine gluconate.

Follow your care team's directions for using CHG.

Your care team may need to help you use CHG. Or they may even bathe you if you're unable to.

When you use CHG, give extra attention to any areas that may have an increased risk of infection. This includes the area around a CVAD and the area around the surgical site.

To start, you may want to have a timer, a clean towel, and a clean change of your hospital clothing nearby.

Here's how CHG bathing with a bottle solution is typically done.

If your doctor says it's okay to wash your hair, wash it first with your normal shampoo.

Rinse your hair and body completely.

Now turn off the water or step away from the shower's stream so you can apply the CHG soap where it won't rinse off.

When applying CHG, try not to get it in your eyes, ears, nose, or mouth.

Start from the jaw down, and lather your body with the CHG.

Take about 5 minutes to wash your whole body.

Follow your care team's instructions on use of CHG for your genital and rectal areas.

Now that you have CHG on your body, wait about 2 minutes before rinsing off.

After the 2 minutes, turn the shower back on and rinse your body well.

After using CHG, do not wash again with your regular soap.

Pat your body dry with the towel, and then put on your clean hospital clothing.

After using CHG, do not shower, rinse off, or bathe.

And do not put on any lotions, powders, deodorants, perfumes, or makeup.

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Now, if your care team gave you CHG wipes, here's how to use them.

If your doctor says it's okay, you can shower or bathe first.

But wait but wait 30 minutes so that you're completely dry after taking the shower or bath before you use the CHG wipes. Be sure to follow your care team's directions for using the wipes, but in general:

Your care team or you will use 1 wipe for each area of the body.

You will need a total of 6 wipes.

And remember, try not to get the CHG in your eyes, ears, nose, or mouth or in your genital or rectal areas.

Spend 20 seconds on each part of your body in this order.

First, start at your neck, wiping your neck, chest, and belly.

Now get a new wipe.

Beginning with your shoulders, wipe both arms, front and back, and then end at the fingertips.

Remember to wipe your armpits.

With another new wipe, wipe both hips, followed by your groin.

Wipe your outer buttocks.

Follow your care team's instructions on use of CHG for your genital and rectal areas.

Plan to use a new wipe for each leg.

Beginning at your thigh, wipe your leg, including behind your knee.

End at your toes.

Wipe between your toes.

Repeat the same order for the other leg.

Finally, it's time to clean your back with the last wipe.

You may need help to get from the base of your neck all the way down to your waistline.

After using the wipes, do not shower, rinse off, or bathe.

And don't put on any lotions, powders, deodorants, perfumes, or makeup.

After using CHG, your skin may feel sticky or even itchy. This is normal.

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But if you get a rash or your skin gets irritated, let your care team know.

Do not bathe with CHG or use the CHG wipes again.

So that's how to do CHG bathing. But always follow your care team's directions. They may want you to do some things a little differently than we've said here.

Bathing with CHG, if you are asked to, is important because it helps reduce the risk of getting an infection while in the hospital.

And if you have any questions or need help, remember that you can always call on your care team.