Getting Your Skin Ready for Total Shoulder Arthroplasty Surgery

Read this handout to learn how to get your skin ready before surgery. This helps lower your risk for infection. Review the steps below and plan enough time to do each step with care.

Your clinic will give you chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) soap. They will also give you 5% benzoyl peroxide gel or have you get it at your local drugstore. Call your clinic if you have questions.

Supplies Needed

- Benzoyl peroxide gel
- Regular hand soap
- CHG soap and a clean washcloth
- Clean towels, bed sheets, pillowcase, and pajamas

Start 5 Days Before Surgery (Daily)

1. Shower or bathe like usual. Do not shave or wax near the area where you will have your surgery.
2. Turn off or step out of the stream of water.
3. Wet a clean washcloth. Apply CHG soap to your hand or a washcloth and apply from neck to toes. **Do not** apply the soap directly to your face, head, or genital area.
4. Wait 60 seconds (sing happy birthday two times slowly). Do not scrub. Minimal contact to the genital area during rinsing is fine.
5. Rinse with warm water. Do not scrub.
6. Blot your skin dry with a clean towel.
7. **Do not** use lotions, creams, powders, perfume or makeup after the shower or bath.

Start 2 Days Before Surgery (Morning and Evening)

Along with the CHG daily cleansing, start the below process for the 5% benzoyl peroxide gel.

1. Wash your hands with regular soap and water.
2. Apply a half dollar sized amount of benzoyl peroxide gel to the front and back of the shoulder that you will have surgery on. **Do not rinse off.**
3. Wash your hands with soap and water.
4. The peroxide may stain or fade clothing.

Day Before Surgery (Morning)

1. Shower or bathe with the CHG soap.
2. Repeat steps 1-3 above for applying the benzoyl peroxide.

Night Before Surgery (After 6:00pm)

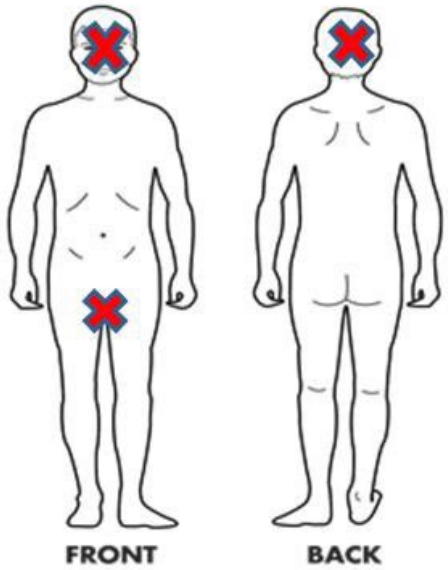
1. Shower or bathe with the CHG soap.
2. Repeat steps 1-3 above for applying the benzoyl peroxide.
3. Use clean pajamas and clean sheets.
4. **Do not** apply deodorant to surgical side.

The Morning of Surgery at Home

1. Shower or bathe with the CHG soap.
2. Repeat steps 1-3 above for applying the benzoyl peroxide.
3. **Avoid** anything that could make you sweat before surgery. Your skin needs to be clean and ready for surgery. **Do not** apply deodorant to surgical side.

Tips

- **Do not** use if you are allergic to benzoyl peroxide, CHG soap, or any other ingredient in these products.
- If you notice a rash, redness or itching after using the CHG soap or the benzoyl peroxide gel, rinse off. **Do not** use it again. When you arrive for surgery, tell your health care team about your reaction.
- **Avoid** getting CHG or benzoyl peroxide in your eyes, nose and ears.



Pre-Operative Skin Assessment

During your check-in before surgery, staff will check your skin from head to toe. This helps find skin problems that can raise your risk for infection after surgery. Skin problems anywhere on your body be infected, even if they are not near your surgery site. Tell staff if you have any cuts, scratches, rashes, or open wounds.

Checklist

5 Days Before Surgery

- ☐ Wash with CHG

4 Days Before Surgery

- ☐ Wash with CHG

3 Days Before Surgery

- ☐ Wash with CHG

2 Days Before Surgery

- ☐ Wash with CHG AM
- ☐ Apply Benzoyl Peroxide in AM
- ☐ Apply Benzoyl Peroxide in PM

1 Day Before Surgery

- ☐ Wash with CHG in AM
- ☐ Apply Benzoyl Peroxide in AM
- ☐ Wash with CHG after 6 PM
- ☐ Apply Benzoyl Peroxide in PM

Day of Surgery

- ☐ Wash with CHG in AM
- ☐ Apply Benzoyl Peroxide in AM

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 6/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#8190.