

Skin Prep Before Joint Replacement

Colby Wollenman, M.D. • Hip, Knee & Shoulder Replacement

Infection after joint replacement is rare but serious. Please follow these steps exactly.

What to buy

- **4% chlorhexidine (CHG) skin wash**, such as Hibiclens or a store brand (first-aid aisle). At least 12 oz.
- *Shoulder replacement only:* **5% benzoyl peroxide gel or cream** (acne aisle; 4% to 10% is fine).

What to do and when

When	What to do
7 days before	No shaving, waxing or hair-removal cream near the surgery site (legs; armpit for shoulder). We clip hair at surgery if needed. Check your skin, including feet, toenails, groin and skin folds.
5 days before	<i>If prescribed:</i> start the nose ointment.
2 days before	<i>Shoulder replacement only:</i> start benzoyl peroxide (see below). That night: CHG shower #1 .
Night before	CHG shower #2 . Sleep on freshly washed sheets in clean pajamas. Keep pets off your bed.
Morning of surgery	CHG shower #3 , then last nose ointment and benzoyl peroxide. Clean, loose clothes. Nothing else on your skin: no lotion, cream, powder, oil, perfume, makeup, or deodorant near the site. Avoid sweating.

How to do a CHG shower

1. Wash your hair and face with your normal shampoo and soap. Rinse well.
2. Turn off the water. With a clean, wet washcloth, wash from your neck to your toes with about **4 oz of CHG**. Go over the surgery area, armpits, groin, skin folds and feet well.
3. **Leave it on for 1 full minute** (this is what makes it work), then rinse well. Do not rewash with regular soap.
4. Pat (do not rub) dry with a freshly washed towel.

Nose ointment (if prescribed)

- **Mupirocin (Bactroban):** twice a day for the 5 days before surgery; last dose the morning of surgery.
- Coat inside each nostril with a pea-sized amount on a cotton swab; press nostrils together and rub 1 minute.

Shoulder replacement only: benzoyl peroxide

- Twice a day, morning and night, starting **2 days before surgery**. The last use is the morning of surgery (5 uses in all).
- After showering (after your CHG shower on those days), wash your hands, then rub a **half-dollar-sized amount** onto dry skin over the shoulder, armpit, upper chest and upper back on the surgery side. Do not rinse off. Wash your hands again.
- It **bleaches** fabric, so use white or old towels and clothes. Mild redness is normal; call us for blisters or a painful rash.

Allergies and reactions

- **Do not use** CHG, mupirocin or benzoyl peroxide if you are allergic to it or any of its ingredients. Tell us before surgery. If you are allergic to chlorhexidine, shower with regular soap instead.
- Keep these products out of your eyes, nose (except the nose ointment), ears, mouth and genitals.
- If you get a rash, redness or itching, rinse it off, stop using it, call us, and tell the surgical team when you arrive.

Call us before surgery if you have

- A cut, scrape, bug bite, sunburn, rash, pimple or boil near your surgery site
- Any skin infection, open sore, leg wound, infected toenail, or rash in the groin or a skin fold

We may need to treat it first or move your surgery date.