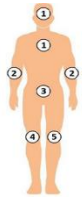




# AHRQ Safety Program for MRSA Prevention



## ICU Universal Decolonization Nursing Protocol: Bed Bathing With 2% Chlorhexidine (CHG) No-Rinse Bathing Cloths

The following protocol details the process for performing skin decolonization using impregnated 2% chlorhexidine (CHG) cloths in the ICU.

### Protocol Overview

- Daily chlorhexidine (CHG) bathing for duration of ICU stay
- Target patient population
  - Include: All ICU patients
  - Exclude: Patients with known allergies to CHG
- Initiate the protocol each time an eligible patient is admitted to the unit, even if the patient has received the protocol in a prior admission.
- For each adult ICU patient, each day:
  - Bathe patient with CHG daily, starting on day 1 of ICU admission, for entire ICU stay.
  - If patient is readmitted, restart the protocol.

### What You Will Need

- A 6-pack of 2% bathing cloths.
  - For obese or incontinent patients, additional cloths may be needed. These cloths typically come as a bundled set of three two-cloth packets. You may consider storing single packets of two cloths separately in the warmer in case they are needed.

### Chlorhexidine (CHG) 2% Bathing Cloths – Key Points

- You may use a warmer to warm up the cloths.
  - Warming is for patient comfort; it is not required. Cold cloths are active and can be used if cool cloths are desired.
- Cloths should be used to bathe the skin with a firm massage to help remove bacteria from the skin.
- The neck:
  - Clean neck well even if it is not visibly soiled
  - Commonly accumulates debris and moisture



- Is a high-risk area for contaminating lines
- Avoid the eyes and ears. Chlorhexidine should not come in contact with eyes or ear canals.\*
- CHG replaces routine bathing:
  - Do NOT bathe with soap and water while using CHG.
  - Use CHG as a shampoo. Many shampoos and soaps will inactivate CHG.
- Use CHG cloths after incontinence clean up.
- Do NOT rinse, wipe off, or dry with another cloth. Let air dry.
- CHG cloths have built-in moisturizers. Skin may feel sticky for a few minutes.
- If additional moisturizer is needed, use only CHG-compatible products.
- Certain lotions will inactivate CHG, ensure to check with manufacturer for compatibility.
- Dispose of leftover cloths.
- Do NOT save, reheat, or reuse.

## Chlorhexidine (CHG) 2% Bathing Process

1. Use the six cloths for bathing all body areas below the jawline:

**Cloth 1:** Face\*, neck, and chest. Avoid eyes and ear canals.

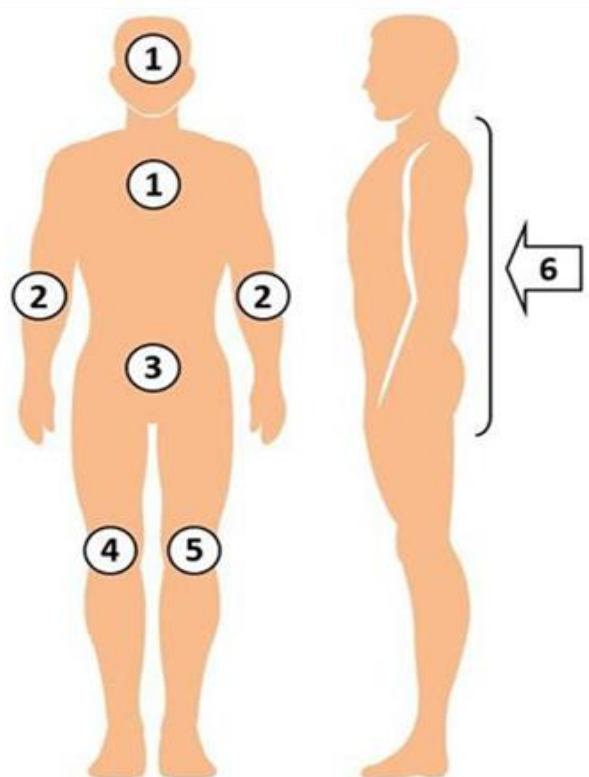
**Cloth 2:** Both shoulders, arms, hands, web spaces, and axilla.

**Cloth 3:** Abdomen and *then* groin/perineum.

**Cloth 4:** Right leg, foot, and web spaces.

**Cloth 5:** Left leg, foot, and web spaces.

**Cloth 6:** Back of neck, back and *then* buttocks.



2. Use additional CHG bathing cloths, if necessary, to thoroughly cleanse the body.
3. After application to each body site, clean tubing from Foleys, drains, G-tube/J-tubes, rectal tubes, chest tubes within 6 inches of the patient.
  - a. A clean portion of a cloth can be used to clean lines and tubing; you do not necessarily need to use an entirely new cloth.
4. Ensure thorough cleaning, with special attention to commonly soiled areas such as the neck, skin folds, and perineal areas. CHG is safe to use on perineal areas, including external mucosa.

5. CHG is also safe for superficial wounds, including stage 1 and stage 2 decubitus ulcers.
6. Pay special attention to cleaning skin areas surrounding lines and other devices to ensure removal of bacteria from skin. CHG is safe on devices and can be used over semi-occlusive dressings.
7. If incontinence occurs, or if there are other secretions on the skin, remove soilage with disposable wipes or towels. Rinse or wipe the affected area with water. Then, clean skin with CHG bathing cloths. If needed, use CHG-compatible barrier protection products for barrier protection (contact product manufacturers to confirm CHG compatibility).
8. Skin may feel sticky for a few minutes after application.
9. Do not rinse with water or wipe off. Allow to dry naturally.
10. CHG cloths have moisturizers. If additional moisturizer or lotion is needed, only use lotions that are known to be compatible with chlorhexidine. CHG compatibility should be assessed by the product's manufacturer.
11. Do not place CHG cloths directly on bedding, as contact with bleach can create a brown stain.
12. Dispose of CHG cloths in the trash. Do not flush.

\*CHG has been safely used on the face and hair in several large studies and clinical trials. Pay special attention to avoid the eyes and ear canals, as would be done when using all soaps. The risk associated with having CHG in the ear canal is that if a patient has a perforated ear drum, that will allow CHG to come in direct contact with deep nerves of the ear. If CHG comes in contact with the eye itself, flush well with water or saline.

## CHG Bathing Process – Cleaning Up

Dispose of each  
washcloth in the trash.



Do **NOT** flush  
washcloths in the toilet.



**Adapted from** “Universal ICU Decolonization: An Enhanced Protocol”:  
<https://www.ahrq.gov/hai/universal-icu-decolonization/index.html>  
and  
“Toolkit for Decolonization of Non-ICU Patients With Devices”:  
<https://www.ahrq.gov/hai/tools/abate/index.html>