

*The* ROYAL MARSDEN

NHS Foundation Trust

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# Preventing wound and chest infections after your operation

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## Patient Information



**NHS**



There is a small risk of wound or chest infections after any operation, and we will do our best to minimise this risk. This leaflet describes what you can do to help us.

## Preventing wound infection

Because skin is not sterile, your skin needs to be as free of germs as possible before your operation. When the decision is made for you to have an operation, the nurse in Outpatients (or pre-assessment clinic) will give you a bottle of Octenisan wash lotion. Octenisan wash lotion is a special antiseptic wash that helps reduce the number of germs on your skin and the risk of a wound infection.

## What do I need to do before the operation?

Two days before your operation date, you should start showering daily (washing your hair at the same time if possible) using the Octenisan wash lotion and following the instructions below. This should be repeated daily and, if possible, for the first two days after your operation. A shower is recommended, however if you are unable to use a shower, please use the product instead of your usual soap when washing in the bath or at a sink.

## How to use the Octenisan body wash

- Wet your skin and hair thoroughly in the shower, then turn the water off
- Put about 15ml (a dessertspoonful) of Octenisan body wash onto a clean wash cloth or flannel
- Apply the Octenisan using a gentle circular rubbing motion over your body, paying special attention to your armpits, groin and feet
- Ensure all skin surfaces from the neck down are covered by the Octenisan body wash
- Shampoo your hair with some more Octenisan

- Ensure that the Octenisan stays on your skin for one full minute
- Rinse thoroughly under the shower to remove all soap residue
- You may apply conditioner to your hair if needed
- Dry your skin thoroughly with a clean, dry towel
- Put on clean underclothes or nightwear afterwards
- It is recommended that bed linen and towels are changed daily and washed in a washing machine on the highest possible temperature for the fabric.

Octenisan is hypo-allergenic and should be suitable for all skin types, even skin that is sensitive to soap or susceptible (prone) to allergies. If you do experience any skin reaction such as severe burning, itching, redness, blistering, peeling, swelling, rash or any other severe irritation, stop using of the Octenisan and tell your doctor.

## Preventing chest infection

After an operation, some people get a sore throat, troublesome cough or even a chest infection. One way to help prevent this from happening is reducing the amount of bacteria that normally live in the mouth before the operation.

## What do I need to do before the operation?

In the weeks before your operation you can make sure your teeth are well looked after.

- Visit your dentist for a check up if you can
- Change your toothbrush
- Rinse your toothbrush after each use and store it dry and upright
- Floss your teeth regularly
- Ensure you brush at least twice a day with a good quality toothbrush and toothpaste

- Make sure that when you come into hospital for your operation you pack a clean toothbrush and some toothpaste with you.

## On the day of your operation

- Please remember to bring your Octenisan wash into the hospital with you, as you will use this to wash with the day after your operation
- If you are an inpatient, wash with Octenisan as near to the time of your operation as possible and put on the clean gown supplied
- If you are coming into the hospital from home, please shower using the Octenisan wash (including hair wash) before you leave
- Do not apply lotions, powder, or deodorant to your body
- Do not shave or remove any body hair below the neck (facial shaving is permitted)
- Brush your teeth well using a clean toothbrush and toothpaste when you first get up and just before you go to Theatre.

## After your operation

It is important to maintain good hygiene after your operation to give your wound the best chance to heal. Try and use the Octenisan body wash for at least two days after your operation, or until the bottle is finished. After this, you can revert to your usual products.

Please let your doctor or nurse know if you experience any problems with your wound.

In the days after your operation we also encourage you to continue to look after your teeth by brushing them at least twice a day.

For more information, please speak to your nurse or ask to speak to one of the Infection Prevention nurses.

You can use the table below to tick off when you have completed the body wash.

<b>2 days before my operation</b>	<b>Day before my operation</b>	<b>Operation day</b>	<b>1st day after my operation</b>	<b>2nd day after my operation</b>

## Contact details

**The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline:** 020 8915 6899  
(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Call us straight away if you are feeling unwell or are worried about the side effects of cancer treatments.

This service provides specialist advice and support to all Royal Marsden patients, as well as to their carers, and both hospital and community-based doctors and nurses caring for Royal Marsden patients.

## Notes and questions



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## References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

Telephone: Chelsea 020 7811 8438 / 020 7808 2083

Sutton 020 8661 3759 / 3951

Email: [patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk](mailto:patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk)

No conflicts of interest were declared in the production of this booklet.

Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

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[royalmarsden.org](http://royalmarsden.org)

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