

Chlorhexidine

Chlorhexidine is a chemical antiseptic and disinfectant that is known to cause allergic reactions. This article aims to provide information to help people who are allergic, or think they may be allergic, to this chemical. If you suspect you are allergic to chlorhexidine, it is important to see your GP, who can refer you to an allergy specialist for testing and medical advice.

Allergic reactions to chlorhexidine can be either immediate (typically within minutes to one hour after exposure) or delayed (up to 72 hours after exposure). Symptoms can range from mild reactions of the skin (such as a rash) to the most serious, life-threatening allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). Read our anaphylaxis factsheet for more information about anaphylaxis:

<https://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/fact-sheet/anaphylaxis-the-facts/>

Avoiding chlorhexidine

If you are allergic to chlorhexidine, carefully read the labels of any products appearing in the list below, or any others that you think could contain chlorhexidine.

Examples of products that could contain chlorhexidine include:

- antiseptic mouthwashes
- antiseptic sore throat lozenges and sprays
- antiseptic toothpastes
- topical eczema creams, washes and emollients
- acne creams
- antiseptic powders, such as athlete's foot powder
- antiseptic creams
- antiseptic wipes
- antiseptic dressings
- skin washes and cleansers
- topical disinfectants

- antiseptic wipes used by staff at blood donor centres
- deodorants and antiperspirants
- hair conditioners
- bladder washouts
- dental implants
- eye drops
- contact lens solutions
- catheters
- multi-use creams and sprays, such as nasal sprays, which may include chlorhexidine as a preservative
- sun creams
- some household products, such as detergent and disinfectant solutions

Apart from the single word chlorhexidine, other chemical names to look out for include chlorhexidine dihydrochloride, chlorhexidine diacetate, chlorhexidine gluconate and chlorhexidine digluconate.

Chlorhexidine can be used during medical procedures. If you are allergic to chlorhexidine, you must declare your allergy if you go into hospital or have dental treatment. Ensure any known allergies are recorded in your patient notes and mention your allergy every time you have treatment. Before having blood tests, check to find out if the wipes they use contain chlorhexidine.

We advise you to wear a medical alert bracelet so that ambulance staff, A&E staff and other medical personnel are aware of your allergy.

Feedback

Please help us to improve our information resources by sending us your feedback at: -

<https://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/information-resources-feedback/>

Sources

All the information we produce is evidence-based or follows expert opinion and is checked by our clinical and research reviewers. If you wish to know the sources we used

in producing any of our information products, please contact info@anaphylaxis.org.uk and we will gladly supply details.

Reviewer

The content of this article has been peer-reviewed by Dr Anna Murphy, Consultant Respiratory Pharmacist, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, Glenfield Hospital, Leicester.

Disclosures

We are not aware of any conflicts of interest in relation to the review of this article.

Disclaimer

The information provided in this article is given in good faith. Every effort is taken to ensure accuracy. All patients are different, and specific cases need specific advice. There is no substitute for good medical advice provided by a medical professional.

About Anaphylaxis UK

Anaphylaxis UK is the only UK-wide charity solely focused on supporting people at risk of serious, life-threatening allergic reactions. We provide information and support to people living with allergies through our free national helpline and local support groups. We also campaign and fundraise to achieve our ultimate aim, to create a safer environment for all people at risk of serious allergies. Visit our website www.anaphylaxis.org.uk and follow us to keep up-to-date with our latest news. We're on Facebook @anaphylaxixUK, LinkedIn, Instagram @anaphylaxisUK, Twitter @AnaphylaxisUK and YouTube.