### Surgical Skin Prep Decision Guide*

**Patient Assessment**

- **Does the patient have any allergies or sensitivities?**
  - CHG allergy or sensitivity: Use iodophor-based product
  - Iodine allergy or sensitivity: Use CHG-based product
  - No known allergy or sensitivity: Use either iodophor or CHG-based product

- **Is the patient less than 2 months old?**
  - Yes: The preferred choice is a product that is specified by the manufacturer for patients under two months of age. When products contain a warning or caution regarding use in infants less than 2 months of age, the perioperative team should collaboratively evaluate risks and benefits of using the products and alternatives such as soaps or saline. The goal is to select a safe and effective surgical skin prep to help reduce bacteria that can cause surgical site infection.
  - No: Use either iodophor or CHG-based product

**Surgical Site Assessment**

- **Intact Skin?**
  - Yes: Use either iodophor or CHG-based product
  - No: Use either iodophor or CHG-based product

  - If open wound or trauma, no alcohol-based products may be used. See manufacturer’s instructions for use.

- **Eyes**
  - Yes: Do not use alcohol-based products
  - No: Do not use CHG as it can cause corneal damage

- **Ears**
  - Yes: Do not use alcohol-based products
  - No: Do not use CHG as it can cause deafness if in contact with the inner ear

- **Mucous Membrane**
  - Yes: Do not use alcohol-based products
  - No: CHG should be used with caution. Some CHG products prohibit use in genital area. See manufacturer’s instructions for use.

**Surgical Factors**

- **Large amount of fluids?** (saline and blood)
  - Yes: Use a water insoluble prep
  - No: Not a factor for prep selection

- **Use of Incise drape?** (orthopedic, cardiovascular, neurosurgery)
  - Yes: Water insoluble preps improve drape adhesion. Drape lift has been associated with a six-fold increase in surgical site infection.1
  - No: Not a factor for prep selection

- **Large prep area?** (bariatric, cardiovascular surgery)
  - Yes: Coverage Area – Efficacy may also be linked to coverage area. Some preps cover more area per applicator than others. Check manufacturer’s coverage information. Using a prep beyond coverage specifications may affect efficacy. This may require more than one applicator to complete the patient prep.
  - No: Not a factor for prep selection

**Safety Factors**

- **Prep area with high microbial count?** (groin, toes, fingernails, skin folds)
  - Yes: Application for Use – Check manufacturer’s instructions for use. Efficacy testing is based on correct application. Some preps have different instructions for use dependent upon dry or moist site.
  - Prepping Technique – An applicator must be discarded after using in a contaminated (higher microbial) area regardless of any remaining solution. This may require the use of more than one applicator to complete the patient prep.

- **Will the patient’s airway be associated in the surgery?**
  - Yes: Consider the flammability risk due to increased oxygen levels (e.g., laser use, cautery) and take necessary precautions.

- **Is a flammable prep used?**
  - Yes: Additional precautions should be taken to minimize the risk of surgical fire. Follow manufacturer’s instructions for use and AORN Guidelines for Perioperative Practice.
  - No: Follow manufacturer’s instructions for use and AORN Guidelines for Perioperative Practice.

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*This guide contains recommendations based on AORN 2016 Guidelines for Perioperative Practice; it is not meant to be all-inclusive of considerations.

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