



## Suspected chlorhexidine reaction

**Thank you for coming to donate today.**

**We are very sorry that a complication has occurred. It is suspected that you may have reacted to the skin cleaning solution that is used prior to your blood donation.**

### **What is ChloraPrep™ and why do we use it?**

ChloraPrep™ is an antiseptic agent which contains chlorhexidine gluconate 2% and isopropyl alcohol 70% in a plastic applicator with a sponge tip. The antiseptic solution is used to clean the skin before the blood donation starts. It is a highly effective skin disinfectant which is largely well tolerated, with rare reports of skin reactions that could be allergic or non-allergic.

Symptoms of a suspected ChloraPrep™ reaction may include the following localised symptoms:

- Red skin rash
- Itchy skin or a raised rash (hives)
- Swelling
- Blisters

Should you experience persistent localised symptoms, please see your GP/pharmacist as a matter of urgency.

### **Generalised symptoms**

Please seek urgent medical attention (attend Accident and Emergency or call 999) if you develop:

- shortness of breath or wheezing
- swelling to the lips or tongue
- a tight throat or difficulty in swallowing
- an awareness of rapid heart rate
- spreading rash over the body

If you would like to know more about the generalised symptoms of allergy, please look this up on the NHS website: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/allergies/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/allergies/)

## Are we sure that this is related to the ChloraPrep™? Could it be something else?

Rashes and/or other symptoms could be due to various causes and may not necessarily mean it is due to an 'allergic' reaction specifically to the skin cleaning solution. Your safety is our main priority. We always work on a precautionary principle and would like to avoid any recurrence of the reaction with repeated exposure. It is important to discuss this with a healthcare professional who can advise you and suggest further tests to rule out allergy to Chlorhexidine as appropriate.

What further actions can you take at home?

- You can take antihistamine and wash your arm with cool water to remove the cleaning solution if required.
- If you are worried or require further information, please call our donor helpline on 0300 123 23 23.
- Visit your GP for a medical review.
- In an emergency seek urgent medical attention (attend Accident & Emergency or call 999).

## Further information and a note of caution

Please note that chlorhexidine-based preparations are used widely in hospitals for skin cleaning before surgical interventions. Chlorhexidine is also incorporated in some catheters (for example, urinary catheters) and in some contact lens cleaning solutions. Everyday household products like Savlon and regular mouthwashes also contain chlorhexidine.

## Our recommendations if you have a suspected chlorhexidine reaction:

- Inform your GP and seek medical help as appropriate.
- All suspected chlorhexidine allergy should be referred for allergy testing to rule out or confirm a chlorhexidine allergy.
- Avoid products with chlorhexidine until you are seen in an allergy clinic.
- Withdraw from future donation.

Please be aware, ChloraPrep™ is the only skin cleaning solution that we have available. There are no validated alternatives at present.

The safety of our blood donors is paramount, and once a ChloraPrep™ reaction is suspected, you are withdrawn from donation on a precautionary principle to avoid repeated reactions.

However, once it has been confirmed by an allergy specialist that the reaction was not due to chlorhexidine, you can potentially return to donate blood again.

## NHS Blood and Transplant

NHS Blood and Transplant saves and improves lives by providing a safe, reliable, and efficient supply of blood and associated services to the NHS in England. We are the organ donor organisation for the UK and responsible for matching and allocating donated organs. We rely on thousands of members of the public who voluntarily donate their blood, organs, tissues, and stem cells. Thank you very much for your time and support and although we have advised you not to donate, you may still be able to help patients by encouraging others to become blood donors.

For more information, visit [nhsbt.nhs.uk](https://nhsbt.nhs.uk)

Call **0300 123 23 23**