

Staphylococcal bacteria load reduction before a procedure

*Consumer Reviewed Resource*

Information for patients

Staph is a germ (bacteria) that is commonly carried on the skin and in the nose. Staph does not cause you any harm unless your skin barrier is broken. For example cuts or scratches, including operations or procedures that involve cutting your skin. Infection may happen after your skin barrier is broken or the Staph germ goes into a hair follicle on your skin. This can lead to a boil or an infected skin sore.

You may have had a skin or nose swab where Staph has been identified. In most cases, people with Staph are carriers, meaning they display no symptoms. Some strains, such as Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcal Aureus, can be resistant to a group of antibiotics.

The purpose of load reduction is to reduce the number of bacteria on your skin and / or in your nose, prior to having a procedure or an operation. This will minimise your risk of getting a Staphylococcus aureus, also known as “Staph” or “golden staph” infection after your operation or procedure.

Preparation - Things you will need to have at home before starting your load reduction treatment:

- Antiseptic nasal ointment as prescribed from hospital. Hospital staff will tell you how to use the ointment. Do not share your ointment with others.
- Antiseptic body wash or wipes which will be provided by the hospital.
- Cotton buds (for applying nasal ointment).
- Household disinfectant wipes or cleaner to clean home surfaces, including your bathroom.

The day before you start your load reduction treatment

- Throw out any used personal items that have been in contact with your skin or inside your nose or mouth. They are likely to have Staph germs on them. For example your toothbrush, razor, opened roll-on deodorant, skin tape, skin cream and solutions, pumice stones, sponges, make up brushes. You will need to use new personal items at the start of your load reduction treatment
- Wash your hairbrushes and combs, nail files, plastic toys, and clippers in the dishwasher or hot soapy water, or replace with new ones
- Discard or hot wash fluffy toys and pet bedding. Discard magazines, newspapers, and other household clutter.

Remove body piercings prior to starting your load reduction. Keep your piercings out for the whole time you do load reduction treatment. Clean earrings and other piercing elements with soap and water, dry and then store in a clean container until day 5 of treatment has finished.

Staph load reduction treatment. Do each step daily for 5 days

Your treatment should finish **the day before** your operation or procedure date. For example if your operation is on a Wednesday, start your treatment on Friday and finish on Tuesday.

- Shower/bath daily and dry with towel. Apply the antiseptic body wipes (see over for instructions).
- If you are told to use the skin wash, a separate instruction sheet will be given to you by the hospital. You will need to use the wash for all 5 days.
- Apply antiseptic nasal ointment two times each day - morning and evening (see over for instructions).
- If you have false teeth or a denture plate, remove dentures each evening, clean with a brush and soak teeth in a denture cleaning solution overnight.

If you experience redness or skin irritation after applying the body wipes or ointment, discontinue use and contact your healthcare provider.

Applying antiseptic non-rinse body wipes

- Wipes can be used hot, cold or at room temperature for optimum patient comfort.
- Use one cloth for each area of your body as shown in the table below.
- Wipe over the area but do not use on face, near eyes, ears, mouth, genital, anal or on broken skin and ulcers.
- Pay particular attention to underarms and navel area.
- Use a new cloth for the next area in the order described.

1st wipe	Starting from below your jawline wipe around your neck, arms and back.
2nd wipe	Wipe your chest area, sides and then armpits.
3rd wipe	Wipe both legs, front and back starting from top and working to toes
4th wipe	Wipe your groin and buttocks area

When you have used all 4 cloths, allow your body to dry in the air for one minute. **Do not rinse or use a towel to dry off after using the wipes.** Your skin may feel tacky for a few minutes.

- Do not put on moisturisers, lotions, or makeup after preparing your skin.
- Put the used cloths into the household rubbish bin (DO NOT FLUSH down the toilet).
- Wash your hands with soap and running water after putting wipes in the bin.

Applying the antiseptic nasal ointment

- Wash your hands with soap and running water.
- Open ointment and squeeze out enough to cover the tips of two cotton buds.
- Apply ointment around the inside of one nostril. Put the tip of the cotton bud only up in your nose.
- Apply ointment around the inside of the other nostril, using the second cotton bud.
- Press index finger and thumb against both nostrils and use a circular motion to massage the ointment within the nose.
- Put cotton buds in the bin and wash hands with soap and running water.

Household cleaning

- Clean and disinfect the shower floor and/or bathtub daily with a household disinfectant product.
- On **days 2 and 5** of treatment, clean the house well (especially the bedrooms and bathrooms). Dust off surfaces and then vacuum the floor and soft furnishings.
- Wipe over all frequently touched hard surfaces with disinfectant wipes or a damp clean cloth containing disinfectant. For example chair arms, flat surfaces, light switches and controls, toilet buttons, computer keyboard and mouse, cupboard handles.
- Wash vinyl/leather covered furniture – as per manufacturer's instruction or with warm soapy water and dry with a clean towel.
- On days 2 and 5, change bed linen, towels, and clothes. Hot machine wash linen, towels, and clothes (if able to) with normal laundry detergent.

Frequently asked questions

1. Do I require testing for staph carriage after load reduction?

In general, no further testing is required before or after your procedure or operation.

2. Does staph load reduction always work?

No, it is still possible for you to get a staph infection after the procedure or operation, but the load reduction does make this less likely.

3. Do my other household members require treatment as well?

No, this is a pre procedure management, other household members do not get treated.