



SCOT Statement on Chlorhexidine 2% Skin Preparation Supply Issues

The following statement is provided by SCOT to Orthopaedic Surgeons in Scotland:

SCOT notes the recent halt in supply of the Ecolab 2% Chlorhexidine solution (in isopropyl alcohol 70%) which was in wide use as surgical skin preparation across Scotland. A number of different suppliers and solutions are available on the market, not all of which carry a license for use as skin preparation. Some also use alternative alcohol preparations. SCOT raised this issue with National Procurement as soon as we became aware of the issue, and we have been included in subsequent national discussions.

There is currently no clear evidence that 0.5% Chlorhexidine solution is either equivalent or non-inferior to 2% Chlorhexidine, particularly in the case of implant related surgery where control of infection risk is of paramount importance. SCOT also recognises that a meta-analysis published in the Lancet recommends 2% over 0.5% for surgical skin preparation

([https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247\(22\)00187-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247(22)00187-2/fulltext)). Surgeons also need to be mindful of other risks, such as flammability.

Therefore, units are advised against and should be cautious in moving to alternative solutions other than a licensed alternative 2% preparation, particularly in the context of implant related orthopaedic surgery. One preparation is currently available in Scotland (BD Chloraprep) and in use in some areas. There is however a significant cost pressure associated with change to this product.

A licensed large volume bottled solution may become available in the future but depend on UK licensing being received from the MHRA for products currently supplied in the European market. SCOT continues to provide input to the National Procurement work in this area.

Any change in skin preparation practice should be accompanied by close audit of surgical site infections.