

“Anaphylaxis to chlorhexidine was first reported in 1984 and was almost always seen in men. However, in the last 4 years we have observed a surge in confirmed cases of anaphylaxis to chlorhexidine, with increasing numbers of female patients recently diagnosed.” Odedra and Farooque (2014).

Reference:

Odedra, K.M. and Farooque, S. (2014) Chlorhexidine: an unrecognised cause of anaphylaxis. Postgraduate Medical Journal. October 28th. .

Anaphylaxis to chlorhexidine reviewed in this article [@ivteam #ivteam](http://ctt.ec/6aLVZ+)

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Abstract:

Chlorhexidine is a highly effective antiseptic and disinfectant. In the past 20 years there has been a substantial increase in the number of chlorhexidine containing products used in healthcare. Anaphylaxis to chlorhexidine was first reported in 1984 and was almost always seen in men. However, in the last 4 years we have observed a surge in confirmed cases of anaphylaxis to chlorhexidine, with increasing numbers of female patients recently diagnosed. Yet, awareness of chlorhexidine as a cause of anaphylaxis is low because it is not a drug but a ‘hidden’ allergen, for example as a coating on medical devices such as central lines and urinary catheters. Patients will often have more than one allergic/anaphylactic reaction before the diagnosis is suspected. We have observed that there is poor recognition of an initial allergic reaction to chlorhexidine, which is well described. This, alongside poor labelling of chlorhexidine containing products, has resulted in further inadvertent exposure resulting in severe anaphylaxis. Prompt referral to a specialist allergy centre ensures appropriate investigations, diagnosis and management. Increasing awareness of the potential risk of life-threatening anaphylaxis associated with chlorhexidine use is vital, particularly in perioperative procedures. Healthcare workers are fundamental in avoiding and preventing further reactions to chlorhexidine containing products in patients diagnosed with anaphylaxis to chlorhexidine.

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