



This study examined the prevalence of self-reported symptoms of sensitivity to chlorhexidine solutions among health care workers” Barnes et al (2019).

Reference:

Background: Health service hand hygiene programs have seen widespread use of chlorhexidine solutions. Reports of both immediate and delayed hypersensitivity to chlorhexidine are increasing among health care workers. This study examined the prevalence of self-reported symptoms of sensitivity to chlorhexidine solutions among health care workers.

Methods: This study was a cross-sectional online anonymous survey of all workers at a single health service.

Results: Of the 1,050 completed responses, 76.3% were female, 35.3% were nurses and midwives, 28% were medical staff, and 8.7% were working in nonclinical areas. Over 95% used chlorhexidine-based hand hygiene products in their workplace. Nurses and midwives most frequently reported asthma (13.7%), contact dermatitis (27.8%), and previous testing for allergy to chlorhexidine (4.9%). There was a correlation between both the presence of atopy, eczema, or dermatitis and the self-reporting of dry skin, eczema, or dermatitis attributed to chlorhexidine use.

Discussion: Occupational chlorhexidine allergy is an important risk to health care workers. Self-reported symptoms of sensitivity to chlorhexidine solutions revealed high reported use and presence of skin symptoms among health care workers.

Conclusions: Screening programs need to identify nurses who develop chlorhexidine sensitivity due to occupational exposure. Strategies to mitigate risk should provide alternatives for those with sensitization.

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Reference:

Barnes, S., Stuart, R., Redley, B. (2019) Health care worker sensitivity to chlorhexidine-based hand hygiene solutions: A cross-sectional survey. *American Journal of Infection Control*. February 12th. .

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajic.2019.01.006>

