

UMBILICAL VENOUS CATHETERISATION & REMOVAL

Supporting information

Are alcohol swabs useful for disinfection of the skin?

A 2016 systematic review of 3 RCTs (855 patients) found that chlorhexidine dressing/alcohol skin cleansing reduced catheter colonisation (risk ratio [RR] 0.62, 95% CI 0.45 to 0.86; number needed to treat for an additional beneficial outcome 11, 95% CI 7 to 33), but made no significant difference in major outcomes like sepsis (RR 1.06, 95% CI 0.75 to 1.52) and catheter-related blood stream infection (RR 1.18, 95% CI 0.53 to 2.65; 95% CI -0.02 to 0.03) compared to polyurethane dressing/povidone-iodine cleansing. Chlorhexidine dressing/alcohol cleansing posed a substantial risk of contact dermatitis in preterm infants (RR 43.06, 95% CI 2.61 to 710.44; number needed to treat for an additional harmful outcome 17, 95% CI 13 to 33).

Lai NM, Taylor JE, Tan K et al. Antimicrobial dressings for the prevention of catheter-related infections in newborn infants with central venous catheters. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2016

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD011082.pub2/full>

Evidence Level: I

Last amended September 2017
Last reviewed December 2021