

Skin Decontamination				
		Venepuncture	Vaccinations	Intramuscular Injections-B12
Skin Condition	Clean, intact	Use 70% alcohol swab for 30seconds, air dry	No cleaning required	No cleaning required
	Dirty	Clean with soap + water, then alcohol swab	Clean with soap + water, air dry	Clean with soap + water, air dry
Evidence		<p>□ WHO guidelines and UK IPC policies recommend skin cleansing to reduce contamination and infection risk. [knowledges...are.nhs.uk]</p> <p>□ Older studies (e.g., Dann, 1969) questioned the necessity of swabbing, citing no infections in over 5,000 injections without skin prep. [bmj.com]</p> <p>□ Recent IPC policies (e.g., Harrogate NHS) still recommend skin decontamination as part of best practice. [infectionp...trol.co.uk]</p>	<p>□ WHO and UK Green Book guidance state that if the skin is visibly clean, no disinfection is necessary before vaccination. [healthacad...line.co.uk]</p> <p>□ CADTH review (2020) found limited evidence supporting the effectiveness of alcohol swabbing in preventing infection for routine vaccinations. [cda-amc.ca]</p> <p>□ A Canadian study showed no significant difference in skin reactions between swabbed and non-swabbed injection sites. [hospitalnews.com]</p> <p>□ Practice variation exists, with many clinicians still swabbing due to habit or perceived patient reassurance.</p>	<p>□ WHO-SIGN and UK guidance do not recommend routine skin disinfection before IM injections if the skin is clean. [researchgate.net]</p> <p>□ Studies show alcohol swabbing reduces bacterial count but does not significantly reduce infection rates. [applicatio...ro.who.int]</p> <p>□ Clinical trials comparing swabbing vs. no swabbing found no difference in infection outcomes. [research-r...ith.edu.au]</p> <p>□ Some experts argue that abandoning skin prep may increase infection risk, especially in vulnerable populations. [researchgate.net]</p>
Conclusion		Skin decontamination is recommended- Chlorhexidine-alcohol is preferred.	Routine alcohol swabbing before vaccination is not evidence-based unless the skin is visibly dirty.	Evidence does not support routine skin disinfection before IM injections unless the skin is visibly dirty or the patient is at increased risk.
Additional Info				<p>In late 2024, a coroner's report following a rare fatal infection after a B12 injection recommended reconsidering the use of alcohol wipes before injections. However, national guidance has not changed: the Green Book and NHS England still advise that alcohol swabbing is not required for clean, intact skin</p> <p>The Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England have acknowledged the coroner's concerns but continue to follow the evidence-based guidance</p>