

# The Four Levels of Soap

## 1. Surgical Scrub

**Primary Use:** Skin prep prior to surgery; sterilize the skin

**Active Ingredient:** Chlorhexidine gluconate, betadine, PCMX

**Pros:** Kills the broadest spectrum of microorganisms rapidly

**Cons:** Can be very harsh, drying to the skin; medicinal smell; can be expensive

**Examples:** Hibiclens, Bactoshield, Betadine Scrub

## 2. Healthcare Personnel Handcleanser

**Primary Use:** Healthcare personnel handwash

**Active Ingredient:** PCMX

**Pros:** Kills primary microorganisms; considered “broad spectrum”

**Cons:** Many brands are harsh, drying to the skin with repeated washings;  
many have a institutional, medicinal smell

**Examples:** Vionex, Vestal Medicated, Derma Cidol 2000



**Exception: AloeGuard<sup>®</sup>** - “*Kills the Germs, NOT Your Hands!*”  
Smells great too!

## 3. General Antiseptic Cleanser

**Primary Use:** Household; anywhere light-duty germ killing is desired

**Active Ingredient:** Triclosan, PCMX

**Pros:** Readily available

**Cons:** Not recommended for healthcare personnel handwashing\*; drying to skin;  
often unpleasant smell, usually expensive \*(see AloeGuard Tech Bulletin #1)

**Examples:** Dial, Softsoap Antibacterial, many commercial brands

## 4. Non-medicated Soap

**Primary Use:** Household; routine handwashing

**Active Ingredient:** None

**Pros:** Inexpensive; usually gentle on skin

**Cons:** Has no germ killing activity other than provided by mechanical (washing) action

**Examples:** Derma Scrub, Softsoap, many commercial brands

April 2003