



## Hand Sanitizer

They sound innocent enough. Bottles of hand sanitizers which advertise that they kill more than ninety-nine percent of germs are being widely used in homes, hospitals, child care facilities, doctor's offices, dentist offices, and anywhere else that the threat of germs and bacteria lurks. Unfortunately, these bottles of hand sanitizer are also heavily laden with alcohol. To add to hand sanitizer dangers, some brands contain isopropyl alcohol which can kill a person even if small amounts are ingested.

### **Hazards to Children**

Even more concerning is the use of alcohol containing hand sanitizers around small children in homes, pediatrician offices, and day care centers. The unsettling reality is that a small child could die from ingesting only a single ounce of these hand sanitizers. Hand sanitizer dangers are very real and parents as well as workers should be aware of what they're being exposed to when they sanitizer their hands. Most liquid hand sanitizers contain a very high percentage of ethyl or isopropyl alcohol. Reports have surfaced of children requiring medical treatment after ingesting small amounts of these sanitizers, which can even occur through biting fingernails.

- Always store alcohol based hand sanitizers where children and pets can't access them and return them to their designated spot after each use. Use them only when necessary and avoid applying them to the hands of young children who may stick their hands into their mouth. Consider switching over to a hand sanitizer foam which dries more quickly than does the liquid. You can also find alcohol free hand sanitizers on the internet. An example is Hands2Go which comes in water based foaming formula without added alcohol.
- Be aware when you take your kids shopping that many grocery stores provide easy access to alcohol based hand sanitizer for shoppers to use on their hands before handling the baskets. Children should not be allowed access to these easy sources of exposure. Take the time to make other parents aware of hand sanitizer dangers and discourage them from allowing their kids ready access to them.

### **Poisoning**

Although hand sanitizers have a very bitter taste, toddlers have been poisoned by consuming other nasty-tasting cleaning supplies, and sanitizers should be kept out of their reach. Ingestion of liquid hand sanitizers can cause brain damage in extreme cases.

## **Skin Irritation**

Liquid hand sanitizers can cause burning sensations, itching and rashes when applied to existing injuries, including small ones such as paper cuts.

## **Importance of Hand Washing**

People accustomed to using instant hand sanitizers might begin avoiding the more inconvenient process of washing their hands with [soap](#) and water. Sanitizers are not effective at clearing dirt from under fingernails or cleaning visibly grimy hands.

## **Flammability**

Liquid hand sanitizers are highly flammable because of the alcohol content. People should keep these products away from candles, space heaters, light bulbs, barbecue grills and cooking appliances.

## **Further Hazard Considerations**

Additionally, people must be sure their hands are completely dry of the sanitizer before working with open flames such as on a gas range or barbecue grill.

## **Proper use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer**

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers — which don't require water — are an excellent alternative to hand washing, particularly when soap and water aren't available. They're actually more effective than soap and water in killing bacteria and viruses that cause disease. Commercially prepared hand sanitizers contain ingredients that help prevent skin dryness. Using these products can result in less skin dryness and irritation than hand washing.

Not all hand sanitizers are created equal, though. Some "waterless" hand sanitizers don't contain alcohol. Use only the alcohol-based products. The CDC recommends choosing products that contain at least 60 percent alcohol.

### **To use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer:**

- Apply about 1/2 teaspoon of the product to the palm of your hand.
- Rub your hands together, covering all surfaces of your hands, until they're dry.
- If your hands are visibly dirty, however, wash with soap and water, if available, rather than a sanitizer.