

Hand Sanitizer Procedures

The CDC recommends washing hands with soap and water whenever possible because hand washing reduces the amounts of all types of germs and chemicals on hands.

If soap and water are not available, using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can help you avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others.

Hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of microbes on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do not eliminate all types of germs.

Background

Even if your hands appear to be clean, they carry germs. Hands pick up micro-organisms (germs) in a number of ways:

- When people who are sick sneeze or cough, the germs that are making them sick are expelled into the air in tiny droplets. If these droplets get onto your hands and then you touch your mouth, eyes or nose without washing away these germs, you can get sick.
- You can also get sick if you don't wash your hands or sanitize them before and after preparing food and after using the toilet.
- Washing your hands or sanitizing not only prevents you from getting sick, but it also reduces the risk of infecting others.
- Other people can also get sick from the germs unwashed hands leave on objects and surfaces such as doorknobs, keyboards, and other equipment in the home or workplace.

Hand Sanitizer Guidance

All personnel should use an alcohol-based hand rub or wash with soap and water:

- Immediately before touching a client and administering care.
- Before moving from work on a soiled body site to a clean body site on the same client.
- After touching a client or the client's immediate environment.

- After contact with blood, body fluids, or contaminated surfaces.
- Before putting on gloves and immediately after glove removal.
- Before and after handling food.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of microbes on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do not eliminate all types of germs.

- Soap and water are more effective than hand sanitizers at removing certain kinds of germs.
- Although alcohol-based hand sanitizers can inactivate many types of microbes very effectively when used correctly, people may not use a large enough volume of the sanitizers or may wipe it off before it has dried.

Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.

- Studies show that hand sanitizers work well in clinical settings like hospitals, where hands come into contact with germs but generally are not heavily soiled or greasy. However, when hands are heavily soiled or greasy, hand sanitizers may not work well. Handwashing with soap and water is recommended in such circumstances.

Hand sanitizers might not remove harmful chemicals from hands.

- Hand sanitizers cannot remove or inactivate harmful chemicals. If hands have touched harmful chemicals, wash carefully with soap and water.

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

- Sanitizers with an alcohol concentration between 60–95% are more effective at killing germs than those with a lower alcohol concentration or non-alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Hand sanitizers without 60-95% alcohol may merely reduce the growth of germs rather than kill them outright.

When using hand sanitizer, apply the product to the palm of one hand and rub the product all over the surface of your hands until your hands are dry.

- Make sure your hands are dry before using hand sanitizer as wet hands will dilute the product.
- Use enough product to cover all the surfaces of your hands and fingers.
- Rub the hand sanitizer over the front and back of hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Rub your hands together until the product has evaporated. Do not wipe off the hand sanitizer as it needs to dry on the hands to be effective.