Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizer Fact Sheet

Keeping your hands clean is one of the best ways to keep from getting sick and spreading illnesses.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol are one way to help you wash your hands often.

When should I wash my hands with soap and water?
To protect yourself and others against the flu and other germs, wash your hands often. Especially:

- after sneezing, coughing into your hands or blowing your nose
- before and after contact with a sick person
- before you prepare food or eat
- after using the bathroom
- after contact with body fluids, such as after changing a diaper
- when hands are visibly soiled

When can I use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer instead of soap and water?
Alcohol-based hand sanitizers kill germs but are not good for cleaning dirty hands. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used:

- if you’re hands are not visibly soiled
- after sneezing, coughing into your hands or blowing your nose
- before and after contact with a sick person

How should I use alcohol-based hand sanitizers?
- Follow the directions on the product label
- Apply product to the palm of one hand
- Rub your hands together
- Do not wipe your hands – let them dry

Can I use hand sanitizers that are not alcohol-based?
Hand sanitizers that do not contain alcohol may be useful. However, there is more known about the effectiveness of soap and water and alcohol-based hand sanitizer than hand sanitizers that do not contain alcohol.

What precautions should I take when I use hand sanitizers?
- Keep out of reach of children
- Supervise young children when using these products.
- Read all product labels and follow instructions carefully.
- Do not use these products for children younger than 2 years of age.
• Never swallow or put hand sanitizer in your mouth
• Avoid getting hand sanitizers into your eyes
• Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are flammable so never use near heat or flame

What should I do if my child swallows hand sanitizer?
Do not induce vomiting. Immediately call the Poison Control Center any time you suspect a poisoning or have a question about toxic substances. The Center is open 24 hours a day:
  o English-speaking callers, call: (212) POISONS (764-7667)
  o Spanish-speaking callers, call: (212) VENenos (836-3667).

What if I or my child has a reaction to alcohol-based hand sanitizers?
Stop using the product and call the Poison Control Center any time you suspect a poisoning or have a question about toxic substances at:
  o English-speaking callers, call: (212) POISONS (764-7667)
  o Spanish-speaking callers, call: (212) VENenos (836-3667).