



## 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 your 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.



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**  
Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H.  
*Commissioner*

- 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).