

facts: About



The Use of Alcohol-based Hand Sanitizers in Ohio Schools

Summary

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be effective when used for hand hygiene. They may be safely and effectively used in the school setting if guidelines are followed.

Background

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend hand washing to reduce infection transmission. The single most important thing that we can do to keep from getting sick and spreading illness to others is to clean our hands. The CDC, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and American Cleaning Institute recommend making handwashing a priority at a young age. Effective hand washing can be done with either soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Many schools have implemented a written protocol for handwashing which may require the use of soap and water and alcohol-based hand sanitizers.

Purpose

If hands are visibly soiled, soap and water should be used for hand hygiene. In other circumstances, the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers is acceptable. In the case of younger students, who may not thoroughly wash, rinse and dry hands, the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers may be more effective than and preferable to the use of soap and water when hands are not visibly soiled. The use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers can allow a large number of students and staff to cleanse their hands in a time-efficient manner. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers must be 60-95 percent alcohol to be effective. Lower alcohol concentrations or non-alcohol-based hand sanitizers are less effective in killing germs. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not effective in removing nut allergens from surfaces. It is recommended that unscented products be used in the school setting, as scented products may trigger asthma or allergy symptoms.

Guidelines for Use

Hand hygiene with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be done frequently, and especially at the following times:

Before

- Preparing food
- Eating
- Inserting or removing contact lenses
- Rendering first aid or treating a person who is ill
- Administering medication or completing a medical procedure

After

- Any contact with blood, body fluids or soiled objects
- Using the toilet
- Assisting with personal hygiene, such as changing diapers
- Touching animals or animal waste
- Food preparation, especially after handling raw meat, poultry or fish
- Blowing your nose, using a tissue or coughing or sneezing into your hands
- Treating or touching open wounds or a person who is sick or injured
- After handling trash or garbage
- After playing outdoors

In Ohio schools, all students and staff should receive instruction on the appropriate and effective use of hand sanitizers. The following are best practice recommendations for the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers in Ohio schools:

- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers should be located in key high traffic areas where students are supervised by school staff at all times
- Do not allow students or staff to ingest alcohol-based hand sanitizers
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are flammable and should not be used while smoking or near open flame
- It is recommended that the school purchase alcohol-based hand sanitizers for use in each classroom and cafeteria, just as it purchases

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soap and towels for restrooms and kitchens. The advantages for such a school purchase include:

- o The school will have a material safety datasheet (MSDS) for all alcohol-based hand sanitizers in the building
- o Refills for the alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be stored with cleaning supplies away from heat sources or open flames and in accordance with Ohio Fire Code regulations (OAC 1301:7-7-3405.5)
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers must be located so they do not drip liquid on the floor to create a fall hazard. A “drip catcher” may be placed on the dispenser to prevent this

Instructions for Placement and Storage

The placement of the alcohol-based hand sanitizers, if wall mounted, should be consistent from room to room and in compliance with the Ohio Fire Code regulations (OAC 1301:7-7-3405.5) summarized here. Dispensers must:

- Have a maximum capacity of 68 ounces
- Be a minimum of 48 inches apart
- Be installed in locations that are not above, below or directly adjacent to electrical outlets, switches, appliances, devices or any other potential ignition source
- Be placed between 42 and 48 inches from the floor
- Be manually activated
- Be properly supplied with sprinkler systems if placed in carpeted areas

In addition, alcohol-based hand sanitizers in school hallways or corridors must comply with Ohio Fire Code regulations (OAC 1301:7-7-3405.5) summarized here:

- There can be no aerosol containers in the hallway
- Dispensers can have a maximum capacity of 41 ounces
- There can be no more than 10 gallons in the hallway
- The hallway must be a minimum of 72 inches in width
- There can be no unapproved projections into the hallway

References

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