

Adverse Events from Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizers

The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has released a drug safety communication today, warning of reports of side effects after applying alcohol-based hand sanitizers on their skin. Reported side effects may include: headache, nausea, and dizziness. These effects are likely related to inhalation of vapors from the hand sanitizers when used in enclosed spaces or places with poor air circulation.

The use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers has increased with the COVID-19 pandemic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol when soap and water are not available. The FDA and poison control centers have received reports of adverse events from skin and inhalation exposure to alcohol-based hand sanitizers. While most cases are minor, some may be serious or require treatment by a health care provider.



Recommendations for Patients:

- Use hand sanitizers in well-ventilated areas. If you are in an enclosed area, open a window or door to improve ventilation until the hand sanitizer is dry and the vapors have cleared.
- Make sure your hands are dry and vapors have cleared before doing any activities involving heat, sparks, static electricity, or open flames.
- Read and follow directions and warnings on the hand sanitizer Facts label.

Recommendations for health care professionals:

- Use hand sanitizers in well-ventilated areas, especially if using it frequently throughout the day.

The complete Drug Safety Communication can be viewed on the [FDA website](#).

Before using hand sanitizers, check the [FDA's do-not-use list of hand sanitizers](#) which identifies products that may contain harmful ingredients or contaminants. If patients experience side effects from hand sanitizer or if someone ingests it:

- a) contact poison control at 1-800-222-1222 or [online](#) and
- b) please report adverse events involving hand sanitizers or other medicines to the MedWatch program as recommended in the [Indian Health Manual](#) and include "IHS" in the reporter section (section G).

Instructions for reporting are located on the [IHS Pharmacovigilance website](#).