

## FDA UPDATE ON HAND SANITIZERS CONSUMERS SHOULD NOT USE

Hand sanitizer has been in high demand due to the coronavirus pandemic and many new brands have emerged into the market because of the shortage. Unfortunately, there are some companies taking advantage of the increased usage of hand sanitizers and putting lives at risk by selling products with dangerous and hazardous ingredients.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a warning to consumers and health care professionals about hand sanitizer products that have low levels of ethyl alcohol or isopropyl alcohol, which is the active ingredient in hand sanitizer. In addition, they have also issued warnings on hand sanitizers that contain methanol or wood alcohol. The FDA has seen an increase in hand sanitizer products that are labeled to contain ethanol but have tested positive for methanol contamination. Methanol is a substance that is often used as a solvent, pesticide and alternative fuel source that is not an acceptable active ingredient for hand sanitizer products. This chemical can be toxic if absorbed through the skin as well as life threatening when ingested.

Consumers using products that are contaminated with methanol can dehydrate the skin which can result in dermatitis to the affected region. Additionally, it can be absorbed through the skin, which can then result in toxic levels. Most at risk are young children who accidentally ingest these products as well as individuals who drink these products as an alcohol substitute. Symptoms of methanol poisoning include nausea, vomiting, headache, blurred vision, permanent blindness, seizures, coma, permanent damage to the nervous system and death. Consumers who have been exposed to hand sanitizers containing methanol and are experiencing symptoms should seek immediate medical treatment for potential reversal of toxic effects of methanol poisoning.

The FDA continues to quality test hand sanitizers, including products entering the United States from other countries. The FDA maintains a list of tested and recalled hand sanitizers which is continually updated as dangerous products are discovered. This list can be found at:

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/fda-updates-hand-sanitizers-consumers-should-not-use#products>

The FDA has placed hand sanitizers that have been recalled on an import alert so that they cannot legally enter the United States market.

Since hand sanitizers containing methanol may still be found online and at retail stores, you need to be cautious prior to purchasing them. If you find that you have a hand sanitizer on the FDA recall list, it is recommended that you stop using the hand sanitizer and dispose of the chemical and bottle properly.

Concerns the FDA has with hand sanitizers are:

- The drinking of any hand sanitizer under any conditions. While hand sanitizers with possible methanol contamination are more life-threatening than those that are not contaminated, the FDA urges consumers not to drink any of these products.
- Certain hand sanitizers that may contain less than 60% of ethyl alcohol or isopropyl alcohol.
- Hand sanitizers that are sold or offered for sale with false and misleading, unproven claims that they can prevent the spread of viruses such as COVID-19, including claims that they can provide 24-hour protection.
- Products that are fraudulently marketed as “FDA-approved” since there are no hand sanitizers approved by FDA.
- Products packaged to appear as drinks, candy or liquor bottles, as well as products marketed as drinks or cocktails because their appearance could result in accidental ingestion or encourage ingestion. Children are particularly at risk with these products since ingesting only a small amount of hand sanitizer may be lethal in a young child.
- Products labeled with harmful or poisonous ingredients, such as methanol.

It is important to become familiar with the hand sanitizers that you have purchased or are planning to purchase to ensure that you are aware of the chemicals that they consist of in addition to checking the FDA recall list:

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/fda-updates-hand-sanitizers-consumers-should-not-use#products>

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