

What Everyone Should Know About Hand Hygiene Products

Is PURELL® Instant Hand Sanitizer active against Swine Flu?

While no hand sanitizer is indicated to prevent Swine Flu, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one of the ways you can help protect yourself from Swine Flu is by practicing good hand hygiene. Specific CDC recommendations include keeping your hands clean by washing with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water may not be available, such as when you're on the go.

How do most infectious diseases spread?

According to the International Scientific Forum on Home Hygiene (IFH), the hands are one of the most frequent transmission routes for many types of infections as they come into direct contact with known portals of entry for pathogens (mouth, nose, conjunctiva of the eyes). Therefore, practicing proper hand hygiene is the easiest way to help reduce infections. Another way that some infections can spread is through the air, which is why it is important to cover your mouth with a tissue when you sneeze.

What is the proper way to practice hand hygiene?

Use soap and water, especially when hands are visibly dirty. Wash hands with soap and water for 15 to 20 seconds.

When soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Apply enough product to thoroughly wet hands, then rub hands together briskly until dry.

Is PURELL® Instant Hand Sanitizer active against MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus)?

While no hand sanitizer is indicated to prevent methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one of the ways you can help protect yourself from MRSA is by practicing good hand hygiene. Specific CDC recommendations include keeping your hands clean by washing with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

"What has the CDC said about alcohol-based hand sanitizers? Are they useful for children?"

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have recommended the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers when soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty. CDC recommends that children in school may use alcohol-based hand rubs as an alternative to hand washing.*

What types of germs does PURELL® Instant Hand Sanitizer kill?

PURELL® Instant Hand Sanitizer kills common germs that may cause illness. Germ kill has been demonstrated in laboratory tests of common bacteria, viruses and fungi. FDA does not currently allow makers of instant hand sanitizers to make claims against specific types of germs due to its concern that consumers will take away a message that the particular illness caused by these germs will be completely prevented through use of the product. Because germs can be spread in a number of ways and one's chances of actually developing an illness depends on a number of factors, no maker of these products can make that kind of guarantee. However, proper hand hygiene is one of the most important tools to prevent the spread of illness. This is why the CDC and various other organizations recommend hand-washing or use of an alcohol-based instant hand sanitizer, like Purell®, when soap and water are not available.

How does PURELL® Instant Hand Sanitizer fare in effectiveness against transient germs versus resident germs?

The germs live all around us. Our bodies are covered with germs that help us stay healthy and are referred to as resident germs. In addition to the good germs, we are also exposed to transient germs from contact with other people or objects. It is these germs that are often responsible for making you sick. Similar to washing your hands with soap and water, PURELL® products reduce some of your resident germs while killing the transient germs. However, in both cases, your body quickly regenerates your resident germs which are generally harmless and actually important for healthy skin.

Why do you need alcohol?

The alcohol content in PURELL® Instant Hand Sanitizer is at a level which safely and effectively reduces the level on hands of the most common germs that may cause illness. Using alcohol based instant hand sanitizers, when soap and water are not available, is one of the Centers for Disease Control recommendations. Unlike some other instant hand sanitizers and anti-bacterial soaps, laboratory testing has never shown alcohol-based hand sanitizers lead to bacterial resistance.

How effective are alcohol-based hand sanitizers, like PURELL®?

Since PURELL® Instant Hand Sanitizer was introduced 10 years ago to consumers, it has helped millions of children and adults stay healthy and well by reducing bacteria on the skin. PURELL® Instant Hand Sanitizer kills 99.99 percent of the most common germs that may cause illness.

Do alcohol-based hand sanitizers like PURELL® lead to resistant bacteria?

Unlike the active ingredients in some other instant hand sanitizers and anti-bacterial soaps, laboratory testing has never shown alcohol-based hand sanitizers like PURELL® to lead to bacterial resistance. There is no evidence that organisms adapt and become immune to the active ingredient in PURELL® products. Many sources indicate that for organisms to become resistant, low levels of the chemical must remain on the hands for the organisms to adapt. The alcohol in PURELL® does not remain on the hands for long. Once your hands are rubbed dry after application of PURELL®, the alcohol has evaporated completely. PURELL® leaves no harmful residue. A small bit of emollient (skin conditioning agent) is left on the hands after use to leave your hands feeling soft and refreshed.

When is it especially important to practice good hand hygiene?

Practicing good hand hygiene is especially important:

- After using the bathroom
- Before eating or drinking anything
- Before and after handling raw foods, fish, poultry, or eggs
- After using a public phone
- After riding public transportation
- In schools and day care centers
- After changing diapers
- When one is sick
- After shaking hands
- After sneezing or coughing
- After touching an ATM, elevator buttons, escalator handrails

What is the proper use of PURELL® Instant Hand Sanitizer?

As with all over the counter products, it is important to use PURELL® products properly and according to the instructions on the label: wet hands thoroughly with product, and briskly rub hands together until dry. Adults should always supervise children in the use of the product.