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## Contaminants Found in Hand Sanitizers: *A Resource of Families*

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### Key Messages

- When soap and water is not available for handwashing, hand sanitizers are an important tool to prevent the spread of germs.
- There have been reports of contaminants found in some hand sanitizers, including methanol and benzene.
- If hand sanitizer is needed, choose products that have fewer and simpler ingredients and that do not appear on FDA recall lists, use safely, and store out of reach of children.

**There have been reports of various contaminants in hand sanitizers. The contaminants include (but may not be limited to):**

- **Methanol:** The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has recalled more than 100 hand sanitizers due to potential contamination with methanol (instead of the typical anti-germ ingredient ethanol/ethyl alcohol). Methanol can be toxic if ingested.
- **Benzene:** Some hand sanitizers were recently tested by Valisure, and they found that some of the hand sanitizers contained the chemical benzene at levels above what is permitted by the FDA. These results are preliminary and require more expanded testing and review by FDA to better understand the extent and severity of the problem. It is not known if the results are representative of all lots of the sanitizers on the list.

### How can I safely prevent the spread of germs?

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- Hand sanitizer can be part of a strategy to prevent the spread of germs and illness.
- For COVID-19, the primary means of spread is from person-to-person when gathered indoors. That is why ventilation, masks, social distancing, and vaccination are key to preventing COVID. Spread via surfaces is less important for COVID. [Learn more](#) from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).
- Use hand sanitizer only when **soap and water** is not available to clean your hands. Frequent hand washing with soap and warm water is the most effective way to prevent the spread of germs. Wash hands for 20 seconds for best results. Click [here](#) for more guidance on handwashing from the AAP.

### What if I need to use hand sanitizer?

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- Make sure your hand sanitizer meets [CDC recommendations](#) to control COVID-19 (e.g., 60% or more ethanol content).
- If possible, choose hand sanitizers with a few recognizable ingredients like ethyl alcohol, water, glycerin.
- Choose fragrance-free when possible.
- Check to see if your brand of hand sanitizer is on the [FDA recall list](#) for methanol or the [list of benzene-contaminated products](#) identified by Valisure. If it is, stop using it.
- When possible, choose a sanitizer identified by Valisure as containing [very low or no benzene](#); these may be better choices. More testing is needed to determine what products are reliably low in benzene.

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## About PEHSU

The Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units (PEHSUs) are a source of medical information and guidance on prevention, diagnosis, management, and treatment of environmental conditions that influence reproductive and children's health. PEHSUs work with health care professionals, parents, schools, community groups, as well as federal, state, and local agencies to address reproductive and children's environmental health issues where families live, learn, play, and congregate. For more information on PEHSUs and available resources, please visit: <https://www.pehsu.net/>.

For additional resources and information on reproductive and children's environmental health topics that offer continuing education for health professionals, visit:

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