



COVID-19 Health Advisory – July 6, 2020

FDA Issues Warning About Hand Sanitizer Containing Methanol

Situation

On July 5, 2020, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) issued a Health Advisory indicating that serious adverse events have been observed in persons using methanol-based hand sanitizers. The CDC advises consumers not to use any hand sanitizer that has been [recalled by the FDA](#) due to the potential presence of methanol, a “toxic alcohol”, as an active ingredient. Methanol can cause blindness and/or death when absorbed through the skin or when swallowed. Currently, most of the recalled products are manufactured in Mexico. The [entire CDC Health Advisory](#) has been posted on the Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) website.

ACTIONS REQUESTED OF PROVIDERS

1. **Advise** patients to seek medical treatment immediately if they have been exposed to methanol-containing alcohol-based hand sanitizers on the [FDA’s Testing and Manufacturer’s Recalls list](#) and are experiencing symptoms.
2. **Maintain** a high index of suspicion for methanol poisoning when a patient with compatible symptoms presents with a history of alcohol-based hand sanitizer ingestion or repeated use of these products on the skin. Signs and symptoms include headache, blurred vision or blindness, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, loss of coordination, decreased level of consciousness, and laboratory findings such as anion gap metabolic acidosis.
3. **Educate** and advise patients and families that
 - alcohol-based hand sanitizers or rubs should be used **only** for hand hygiene;
 - children should be **supervised** when using alcohol-based hand sanitizers or rubs, and these products should be stored safely out of their reach;
 - alcohol-based hand sanitizers or rubs should **never** be ingested, as this may result in serious adverse health consequences;
 - alcohol-based hand sanitizers or rubs recalled by the FDA **may contain a significant amount of methanol** and using these products may result in serious adverse health events (e.g., blindness and death).
4. **Contact** the local poison center (1-800-222-1222) to report cases and to obtain specific medical management advice for methanol poisoning.

Local Health Department Contact Information

- **Alameda County Acute Communicable Disease Control:**
 - Weekdays 8:30am–5pm Phone: (510) 267-3250
 - After hours Phone: (925) 422-7595 and ask for the public health duty officer on call
 - For **non-immediate concerns**, email nCoV@acgov.org
- **Berkeley Public Health Division:**
 - Weekdays 8am-5pm Phone: (510) 981-5292
 - After hours: Phone: (510) 981-5911 and ask for the Health Officer on call
- [Contact Information for all other Local Health Jurisdictions](#) is available online from CDPH

Resources

- [ACPHD Health Alert Page](#) & [ACPHD COVID-19 Page](#)
- [CDPH COVID-19 Page](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 Page](#)
- [WHO COVID-19 Page](#)