

Public Health Risk Associated with Methanol-contaminated Hand Sanitizers

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The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) is joining the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in alerting consumers of adverse health effects associated with methanol-contaminated hand sanitizers. The warning follows [CDC reports](#) of seven people in New Mexico who experienced serious health events, including permanent blindness and death, due to purportedly ingesting methanol-contaminated hand sanitizers or rubs manufactured in Mexico.

Unlike ethanol (also referred to as ethyl alcohol) or isopropanol, which are active ingredients in most commercially available alcohol-based hand sanitizers or rubs, methanol is a toxic alcohol that can cause blindness and/or death when absorbed through the skin or when swallowed. No alcohol-based hand sanitizers should ever be ingested.

The FDA is working with manufacturers and distributors on a voluntary recall of products that are contaminated with a significant amount of methanol. The agency has also [issued a warning](#) to consumers and health care providers that there has been a sharp increase in products, manufactured in Mexico, that are labeled to contain ethanol but that have tested positive for methanol contamination.

The CDC had issued the following recommendations for the public:

- Do not swallow any alcohol-based hand sanitizer or rub. These chemicals are not intended for human consumption and can lead to serious health issues, including death.
- Check your alcohol-based hand sanitizer or rub against the [FDA's testing and manufacturer's recalls list](#). If your product is on this list, stop using the product and dispose of it immediately in appropriate hazardous waste containers; do not flush or pour them down the drain.
- Only use hand sanitizers for their intended purpose – to clean hands.
- Keep alcohol-based hand sanitizers out of reach of children and supervise their use.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you have swallowed alcohol-based hand sanitizer or are experiencing symptoms from repeated use of these products on your skin, and contact your [poison center](#) (1-800-222-1222) for advice. Signs and symptoms include headache, blurred vision or blindness, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, loss of coordination and decreased alertness.

Along with wearing a face covering and waiting six feet from others, [hand washing](#) is critical to preventing the spread of COVID-19. Use soap and water whenever they are available to wash hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating and after coughing, sneezing, or nose blowing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains 60 percent ethanol.

Read the CDC's [official health advisory](#) or visit www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/fda-updates-hand-sanitizers-methanol to view the FDA's full list of testing and manufacturing recalls.