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To: District Superintendents Date: November 20, 2009
Superintendents of Schools
Administrators of Charter and Nonpublic Schools

From: Jean C. Stevens *Jean C. Stevens*

Subject: Updated Information Regarding Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizers

This memorandum updates the State Education Department's 2007 guidance on the use of alcohol based hand sanitizers in the school setting. The earlier memorandum in response to community MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus) outbreaks informed schools that effective immediately, School Medical Directors may approve and permit the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers for use in their facilities without individual's physician orders; as alcohol-based hand sanitizers are considered over-the-counter drugs by the United States Food and Drug Administration.

This guidance is still in effect. Given the H1N1 pandemic, alcohol based hand sanitizers (with at least 60% alcohol) are an effective alternative for cleaning hands, and are recommended as an alternative to soap and water by the NYS Department of Health. Hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of disease. Schools should provide adequate facilities for hand washing and promote proper hand washing before meals, after recess or physical education, and other times, as appropriate.

Student use of alcohol based hand sanitizers should always be supervised by adults. Parents/guardians can inform the school that they do not want their child to use alcohol based hand sanitizers by sending a written notice to the school.

Please note that hand sanitizers which contain alcohol are flammable. They must not be placed in hallways or near an open flame or source of sparks. If you require further guidance, please contact your BOCES health and safety staff, the State Education Department's Facilities Planning Office at 518-474-3906 or emsc.nysed.gov/facplan; or the Fire Prevention Bureau of the State Office of Fire Prevention and Control at 518-474-6746 or fire@dos.state.ny.us.

A fact sheet on alcohol-based hand sanitizers from the Statewide School Health Services Center is attached for your review.

Attachment



Alcohol Based Hand Sanitizers

Fact Sheet • NY Statewide School Health Services Center

Information for Schools and Parents

Careful hand washing with soap and water is the recommended method to keep hands clean and free of bacteria. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly soiled, the use of alcohol based hand sanitizers (ABHS) offers a convenient, effective and fast way to reduce the spread of germs. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends using an ABHS with a concentration of 60% or higher to be effective against common diseases.

To use an Alcohol Based Hand Sanitizer

- Encourage hand washing with soap and water or using ABHS before eating, after toileting, sneezing or coughing or whenever hands are soiled.
- Apply a dime sized amount of the product to the palm of your hand.
- Rub hands together, covering all surfaces of your hands until your hands are dry.

“Things to Know”

- Alcohol based hand sanitizers (ABHS) significantly reduce the number of germs on skin.
- To be effective, alcohol based hand sanitizers are ethyl alcohol based.
- Alcohol can be absorbed when ingested or applied to the skin.
- Children should be supervised when using hand sanitizers. ABHS dispensers should be located in areas where students are supervised (hallways not recommended). ABHS should not be ingested.
- Discourage fingernail biting and touching of the eyes, nose and mouth, especially when sanitizer is wet.

Keeping our hands clean is one of the most important things we can do to keep from getting sick and from spreading germs to others!