

Hand Sanitizer FAQs

Do alcohol-free sanitizers work?

Yes. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can reduce the number of germs on the hands, but they do not eliminate all types of germs. Soap and water are more effective than hand sanitizers at removing germs such as *Cryptosporidium norovirus* and *Clostridium difficile*.

How much hand sanitizer is needed to clean your hands?

Follow the instructions on the bottle of hand sanitizer. Most will instruct you to use an amount the size of a quarter. You need to cover all surfaces of your hands, the top, bottom, fingers, around fingertips and fingernails, and rub up your wrist about two inches.



How long do you rub your hands together when using hand sanitizer?

Rub your hands together for about 15-30 seconds (about the time it takes to sing the Happy Birthday to You song) or until hands feel dry.

Do I have to wait for the hand sanitizer to dry on my skin?

Yes. Rub your hands together until the hand sanitizer feels dry on your skin. DO NOT wave your hands around to dry them because they will pick up microorganisms that are in the air.

When do you need to use soap and water instead of hand sanitizer?

Hand sanitizers are not as effective on hands that are greasy or heavily soiled. It is best to use soap and water after handling food, playing sports, gardening, camping, fishing or working on vehicles.

I have eczema, is hand sanitizer bad for my skin?

It is better for people with eczema to wash hands with soap and water, then apply hand cream. Hand sanitizers can be very irritating to eczema skin. If you must use hand sanitizer, apply moisturizing cream after your hands are dry. Avoid hand sanitizers with essential oils as they can irritate skin further.

Can I wave my hands around to dry them after using hand sanitizer?

No. DO NOT wave your hands around to dry them because they will pick up microorganisms that are in the air.

Do natural hand sanitizers work?

Research currently indicates that natural or herbal hand sanitizers are NOT effective at killing germs.

How much alcohol content is required for hand sanitizer to be effective?

Hand sanitizers need to have at least 60 percent alcohol to kill germs.

Visit our website for more information about support groups, clinical trials and lifestyle information.

© Copyright 2020

NOTE: This information is provided to you as an educational service of National Jewish Health. It is not meant to

be a substitute for consulting with your own physician.

National Jewish Health is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 121 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit njhealth.org.