

# Hand Sanitizers

## The Why and How

**Hand sanitizer is a liquid or gel containing alcohol (at least 60%) used to kill infection-causing microorganisms.**

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers kill germs, including antibiotic-resistant germs, by destroying the proteins and breaking down the protective outer membrane that germs need to survive.

### What is the difference between handwashing and hand sanitizing?

| Handwashing                                                       | Hand sanitizing                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Remove all types of germs from hands                              | Kills certain germs on the skin                                                  |
| Reduces the amounts of all types of chemicals and metals on hands | May not remove harmful chemicals, such as pesticides and heavy metals, like lead |
| Cleaning agent: soap                                              | Sanitizing agent: ethyl alcohol (60 to 80%) or isopropanol (60-75%)              |

### Hand sanitizers are not a replacement for handwashing in foodservice. Why?

- Hand sanitizers do not remove soil and debris from hands
- The hands of food workers are often wet, lightly or heavily soiled and contaminated
- Water, food, fatty materials, feces and blood on hands can significantly reduce the effectiveness of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Hand sanitizers kill certain pathogens but do not remove them from hands
- Most hand sanitizers do not kill Norovirus, the most common cause of viral foodborne illness
- Alcohol has a drying effect; frequent use can harm skin health
- Hand sanitizers may contain emollients to make them gentler on the skin. These emollients can build up on hands over time and cause chemical contamination of food.

**Washing hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for 20 seconds and completely drying them is the easiest and most effective technique to assure clean hands and prevent cross-contamination and foodborne illness.**

### **Benefits of hand sanitizers**

Low cost

Do not require water

Quick to use

Mobile and portable

Foodservice industry establishments in Canada may provide hand sanitizers for use by the public at the entrance, exits, cash counters and self-serve beverage counters in addition to regular soap and water handwashing facilities.

### **How to use hand sanitizer?**

1. Wash hands in the designated hand sink. Wet hands with warm water. Apply soap. Lather and scrub for 20 seconds. Rinse. Dry hands thoroughly with a disposable paper towel. Turn off the faucet with the towel.
2. Apply a dime-size amount of hand sanitizer containing at least 60 percent alcohol on the palm of one hand.
3. Rub hands together vigorously for 30 seconds, covering all surfaces of both hands. If hands are dry after only 10-15 seconds, not enough sanitizer was used, and more must be applied.
4. Wait for the sanitizer to dry completely before touching food contact surfaces.

### **Health Canada caution and warnings**

- Select hand sanitizers approved by Health Canada with a Drug Identification Number. Ensure access to Safety Data Sheets. Follow Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System 2015 guidelines for storage and use.
- For external use only. Avoid contact with eyes. If contact occurs, rinse thoroughly with water
- Flammability warning for alcohol-based sanitizers: Keep away from open flame and sources of heat.

Knowing when to clean or clean and sanitize your hands will give you the best chance of preventing sickness.

***Remember: Hand sanitizers work only on clean hands!***

***Wash hands properly and frequently!***