



## **GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF HAND SANITIZER IN SCHOOL AND CHILD CARE SETTINGS**

These general guidelines applying to the *Rules and Regulations Governing the Health and Sanitation of Child Care Facilities in the State of Colorado*, 6 CCR 1010-7, are provided by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Consumer Protection Division. Additional information about the rules and regulations may be obtained by calling 303.692.3620 or visiting the Consumer Protection Division's web page – [www.cdphe.state.co.us/cp/](http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/cp/)

### **WHEN CAN HAND SANITIZER BE USED?**

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the use of hand sanitizers, with at least sixty percent (60%) ethanol (ethyl alcohol) or isopropanol (isopropyl alcohol), as a component of hand hygiene in healthcare settings, businesses, places of worship, schools, child care facilities and in the general community to slow the spread of illness, such as seasonal and H1N1 influenza.

Hand sanitizers do not remove soil or gross contamination from hands, therefore CDC recommends that hand sanitizer be used in addition to, not in lieu of, proper hand washing and at times when washing your hands is not possible.

### **HOW SHOULD HAND SANITIZER BE USED?**

For a sanitizer to work effectively, gross contamination from hands must first be removed. Therefore, hands should be washed using soap and water prior to the application of hand sanitizer whenever possible. The *Regulations Governing the Health and Sanitation of Child Care Facilities in the State of Colorado* require handwashing before taking medication, preparing or eating food and after using the restroom, sneezing, coughing and at any other time hands become soiled.

A heavy reliance on hand sanitizer diminishes hand washing and may lead to a false sense of security. Furthermore, extensive use of these products can lead to dried, cracked skin that leaves an individual more susceptible to infection.

### **WHAT AGE OF CHILDREN SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO USE HAND SANITIZER?**

No child under the age of three years old should be permitted to use hand sanitizer. No child of any age should be permitted to use hand sanitizer without supervision.

### **WHAT ARE THE HAZARDS ASSOCIATED WITH HAND SANITIZER?**

The incidental and intentional ingestion of hand sanitizer can be extremely dangerous, particularly for children. Furthermore, children under three years of age can absorb enough alcohol through their skin to cause harmful health effects due to their small size. The most common active ingredients in hand sanitizers are isopropyl and ethyl alcohol. Both of these substances can lead to severe illness and death if ingested. *A one-ounce bottle of 60% isopropyl or ethyl alcohol could result in a deadly blood-alcohol level for a child.*

Because of the high alcohol content in hand sanitizer, the potential for intentional ingesting and abuse by older school-aged children is also a serious concern.

### **HOW SHOULD HAND SANITIZER BE STORED?**

Hand sanitizer should always be stored out of the reach of children and under control of teachers and care givers.

Because the active ingredient in hand sanitizer is alcohol, it is flammable and should be kept away from heat sources and open flames.

### **ARE THERE OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SAFE USE OF HAND SANITIZER?**

Hand sanitizing wipes with at least 60% alcohol will reduce the potential for incidental and intentional ingestion.

Due to flammability, once applied to the skin, avoid contact with sparks and sources of ignition until the hand sanitizer has thoroughly dried.