



Practice Briefs

Is it safe to have alcohol hand sanitizer dispensers around confused adults?

YES

In sufficient quantities, ingestion of alcohol based hand rubs (ABHR) can be harmful. Clearly, you can't ignore the risk. However, a lick of ABHR wouldn't harm a child or anyone else. Poison.org offers the following advice on their website through this link:

<http://www.poison.org/articles/2007-jun/hand-sanitizer-whats-the-real-story>³

You should use the available evidence in your risk assessment to inform decisions about when and how to make ABHR available. Consider the following:

In the article by Archer, Wood, Tizzard, Jones, and Dargan "Alcohol hand rubs: Hygiene and Hazard,"¹ the authors summarize on page 1155 "in our experience, the more serious effects are seen in those who ingest more than 500 mL of hand rub..." It may be worthwhile to seek dispensers with 500 mL or less.

- The usual amount in a bag/dispenser is 1 liter. Smaller volume may also be helpful to meet NFPA guidelines for storage, too.

Some ABHR vendors have products specifically intended for behavioral health environments, such as dispensers which include features like time-delayed output control to prevent intentional misuse, robust barrel style locks to prevent ingress, and stainless steel exteriors which eliminate risk of breakage and weaponization.

- Consider placing dispensers in high use areas such as in corridors between patient care locations which have lots staff traffic and oversight and in dirty utility rooms where staff members have opportunities to sanitize hands and which are off-limits to residents.

1. Archer JRH, Wood DM, Tizzard Z, et al. (2007). Alcohol hand rubs: hygiene and hazard. *BMJ : British Medical Journal*, 335(7630), 1154–1155, retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.39274.583472.AE>
2. Gormley NJ, Bronstein AC, Rasimas JJ, et al. (2012). The Rising Incidence of Intentional Ingestion of Ethanol-Containing Hand Sanitizers. *Critical Care Medicine*, 40(1), 290–294. <http://doi.org/10.1097/CCM.0b013e31822f09c0>
3. Gould Soloway, RA. (2007, June). Hand Sanitizer: What's the Real Story? Retrieved February 20, 2017, retrieved from <http://www.poison.org/articles/2007-jun/hand-sanitizer-whats-the-real-story>

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