

## Treating Children's Colds & Using Hand Sanitizers Carefully

This week's column on hand sanitizers and treating children's colds comes from Bibb County's Regional Extension Agent for Family and Child Development, Sallie Lide-Hooker.

We are all aware of the importance of clean hands, and many of us rely on using hand sanitizers when we are on the go. Although these sanitizers give us a sense of security, we should also be aware of sustaining evidence that "hand sanitizers can in fact pose serious health risks to children who consume them."

The primary ingredient in all hand sanitizers is alcohol, either ethyl or isopropanol (found in rubbing alcohol), at levels as high as 62%. This is even higher than the level of alcohol in vodka! According to a health educator at the Central New York Poison Control Center, "ingesting as little as an ounce or two of this product can be fatal to a toddler."

A child who ingests a dangerous amount of hand sanitizer will more than likely appear to be drunk. They may also complain of headaches, nausea and abdominal pains. If you suspect that a child has ingested even a small amount of hand sanitizer, call 911 and get medical assistance immediately. Then call the poison control center.

Hand sanitizers have proven effective in reducing the occurrence of infectious diseases, but should be kept out of reach of children. We must closely monitor the use of these products with children in our care. Additional information may be found at [www.associatedcontent.com/article/303499](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/303499)

Here's something to think about when treating the little one's cold...In October, 2007, pharmaceutical companies manufacturing products such as Dimetapp, Pediacare, Robutissin, Triaminic and other cold medication for children under six (6) years of age removed their products from the shelves. They took these measures just one week before government advisors were to debate the future of their products.

Child welfare advocates and pediatricians have warned for years that these products were "not only ineffective, but actually posed a health risk to children, primarily from accidental overdose." The Food and Drug Administration and other health groups have reported recent deaths from medicines aimed at children under the age of two.

So, how are parents and caregivers to treat a sick child? Pediatricians warn to avoid panic and simply treat children under two with old fashioned remedies like these:

- \* Suction infants' noses or use salt-water nose drops.
- \* Use clean humidifiers and salt-water solutions to reduce congestion.
- \* Keep the child hydrated with lots of fluids.
- \* Gently squirt saline solution into nostrils and suction excess mucous before feeding.

For more information, go to [www.fda.gov/cder/drug/advisory/cough-cold.htm](http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/advisory/cough-cold.htm).

SOURCES: *The Commercial Appeal*, October 12, 2007, A9 and *USA Today*, October 12, 2007, 6B

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