

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

RESIDENT SAFETY: 4 Ways To Keep Alcohol-Based Hand Gels Out Of The Hands Of Residents With Dementia

Follow the adage, 'Out of sight, out of mind.'

You have to walk a tightrope between providing ample access to alcohol-based handwashing gels to battle infection while protecting residents who might ingest the gels.

If you choose to mount the alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers on walls, take these steps to prevent residents from being attracted to or accessing them, advises **Judy Gross, RN**, a consultant with **LBK Consulting** in Dayton, OH:

- Use a color scheme so the dispensers blend into the wall. "For example, don't put colorful dispensers on a beige wall," Gross cautions.
- Place the dispensers up higher on the wall but within reach of the shortest staff people so they can clean their hands. "Residents with dementia tend not to look up higher on a wall," advises Gross.
- Lock alcohol-based gel in a drawer in the medication cart any time the nurse isn't using it. "Nurses who get used to doing that won't accidentally leave the gel unintended," says Gross.

Rethink this practice: Gross advises against staff carrying small gel dispenser in their pockets. "For one, there is an infection control issue if the nurse or CNA puts the gel dispenser down on a resident's over-bed table, for example, and then takes it to another resident's room," cautions Gross. "Or the staff person could get distracted by something and leave one of the dispenser's in a patient's room," which paves the way for a resident to ingest the gel.