

MDS Alert

Reader Questions: CDC Recommends Alcohol-Based Sanitizers

Question: My hands are so dry from the constant washing. I don't like the fragrance of most hand sanitizers. Is there an essential oils blend or something I can safely use?

New Hampshire Subscriber

Answer: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends an alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) with 60-95 percent alcohol for use in healthcare settings.

"Unless hands are visibly soiled, an alcohol-based hand rub is preferred over soap and water in most clinical situations due to evidence of better compliance compared to soap and water. Hand rubs are generally less irritating to hands and are effective in the absence of a sink," the CDC says in online guidance.



"CDC does not have a recommended alternative to hand rub products with greater than 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol as active ingredients. Benzalkonium chloride, along with both ethanol and isopropanol, is deemed eligible by FDA for use in the formulation of healthcare personnel hand rubs. However, available evidence indicates benzalkonium chloride has less reliable activity against certain bacteria and viruses than either of the alcohols," the agency says. It does not mention any essential oil blends as being safe or effective sanitizing agents.