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To: Local Media

From: Peter Schade, MPH, RS

Urgent warning about methanol-based hand sanitizers or rubs

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has advised consumers not to use any alcohol-based hand sanitizers or rubs (ABHSR) which contain methanol, a “toxic alcohol”, as an active ingredient. Methanol can cause blindness and/or death when absorbed through the skin or when swallowed. The FDA is working with manufacturers and distributors on a voluntary recall of the methanol-containing products. Some ABHSR that were manufactured in Mexico ([view list here](#)) have been found to contain a significant amount of methanol. Repeated use of these products on the skin may result in methanol poisoning, blindness, and death. The highest risk for methanol poisoning is by swallowing ABHSR products containing methanol.

Examples include young children who accidentally swallow these products and adolescents or adults who intentionally swallow these products as an alcohol (ethanol) substitute. The clinical effects of methanol and ethanol poisoning are similar but methanol poisoning may result in severe metabolic acidosis and blindness, and can be fatal if untreated.

If you have any of the methanol-containing ABHSR products in your home, you should discard them immediately. If you are experiencing symptoms of methanol-poisoning (headache, blurred vision, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, loss of coordination, and decreased level of consciousness), call your doctor right away and tell them that you have been exposed to methanol-based hand sanitizer.

Hand hygiene is an important part of the response to the emergence of COVID-19 in the United States. Practicing hand hygiene, which includes using ABHSR, is a simple and effective way to decrease the spread of pathogens and infections. Commercially available ABHSR usually contain either ethanol or isopropanol, and these are safe to continue using.

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Please direct questions about this press release to:

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