



The Poison Apple

Iowa Poison Control Center's newsletter for Iowa school nurses

1-800-222-1222

September 2020



Did you know

A January 2019 survey of Iowa school nurses showed that 81% of school nurses had the poison center phone number posted in their offices; however, only 26% had the phone number saved in their mobile phone and only 21% had the number posted in the school office. Of note, in 2019, nearly 20% of calls to the IPCC from schools were from school staff other than the school nurse.

Be prepared for a poison emergency by posting the phone number throughout the school. Order stickers and magnets with the Poison Help phone number for free [HERE](#).

Hand Sanitizer: Friend or Foe?

Hand sanitizer products usually contain an alcohol (ethanol and/or isopropanol) or benzalkonium chloride (a detergent). Drinking an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing greater than 60% of either alcohol can cause alcohol intoxication and may lead to coma and death.

Calls to poison control indicate children most commonly lick the hand sanitizer after pumping it into their hand or put their mouth on the pump dispenser. Ingesting ethanol-based products can cause low blood sugar in children. Knowing the alcohol concentration and estimated amount swallowed can help predict the severity of toxicity. The toxicity is calculated on a case by case basis by poison control.

In June 2020, the FDA recalled hand sanitizers contaminated with methanol or 1-propanol. Methanol is much more toxic than ethanol or isopropanol, even in small amounts. Methanol poisoning can cause blindness, seizures, coma and death. Ingesting 1-propanol can cause severe acidosis and CNS depression, which can result in death.

Even if the hand sanitizer label says it contains ethanol, isopropanol or benzalkonium chloride, it is important to [check here](#) to make sure it is not one of the recalled products. Methanol may not be listed on the label. Products on the FDA recall list should be disposed of, ideally in a hazardous waste container. Do not pour these products down the drain or flush the contents.

Washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is still the recommended way to clean hands. Children should be supervised when using hand sanitizer and like other potential poison these products should be kept out of sight and reach of children. Call poison control at **1-800-222-1222** with questions or exposures related to any hand sanitizer that has been ingested or gotten into the eye.

Text the word "poison" to 797979 to download (and SAVE) the poison control's contact information into your mobile phone.

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Post and share this edition of **The Poison Apple** with your school colleagues. Send comments or questions to 712-234-8775 (fax) or Tammy.Noble@UnityPoint.org.

The Poison Apple is published by the Iowa Poison Control Center and distributed through the Iowa Board of Education school nurse listserv.