

Use of instant hand sanitizers

IDPH doesn't have an official rule or regulation about the use of instant hand sanitizers by school children. In the guidance document "Management of Chronic Infectious Diseases in Schoolchildren" jointly published by IDPH and the Illinois State Board of Education, the following recommendations are made in Chapter 3: Section 2.A.1. "Allow sufficient time for handwashing after using the toilet and before eating meals and snacks." Section 2.B. "There is no effective substitute for soap and running water when hands are visibly soiled. In situations when soap and water is not available and hands are not visibly soiled or contaminated by blood and body fluids, a waterless alcohol-based hand rub can be used. If hands are visibly soiled and water is not available, a detergent containing towelette should be readily available and used first, followed by the alcohol hand rub....etc" Here is a link to PDF copy of the document: <http://www.idph.state.il.us/health/infect/chronicinfectiousdiseases2003.pdf>

In IDPH's guidance to schools on MRSA published January 2009, IDPH recommends hand washing with soap and water and use of alcohol-based waterless hand sanitizers for hand hygiene when soap and water is not available.

If your school decides to allow the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers, the school should ensure that the product is used in a manner that adequately protects against inappropriate access by students. It will be necessary to ensure that students don't ingest it or use it to injure another person (e.g., fling it into they eyes or facial mucous membranes). Alcohol-based hand sanitizers also must be properly stored - which includes away from high temperatures or flames - in accordance with National Fire Protection Agency recommendations.

Please be aware that the IDPH Food Service Sanitation Code **does not** allow persons who work in school cafeteria programs to use hand sanitizers as a substitute for hand washing. Hand sanitizers, if they meet specific criteria specified in the U.S. FDA's Food Code, may be used after proper hand washing -- but may not be used instead of soap and water handwashing.

Here is a link to an article published in the journal Pediatrics that may be of interest to you. <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/121/6/e1555>

Reducing Absenteeism From Gastrointestinal and Respiratory Illness in Elementary School Students: A Randomized, Controlled Trial

Also of interest, in case you haven't already seen it, here is a link to the "It's a Snap" hand hygiene program <http://www.itsasnap.org/snap/pdfs/SNAP%20Toolkit%20FINAL%204.pdf>