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Influenza Preparedness for Schools **Use of Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizers by Students**

Access to soap and water for hand-washing in schools may be limited. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be made easily available for staff/student use. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) recommends that hand sanitizers used in schools contain at least 60% alcohol, and may be in the form of gels, foams or wipes. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are very effective germicides against many viruses (including influenza) and bacteria (including MRSA/MSSA).

Studies have shown that the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers can decrease rates of illness and absenteeism among students and has the potential to reduce teacher absenteeism, school operating costs, healthcare costs and parental absenteeism. It is possible that effective use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers might reduce the need for student dismissals.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used safely in the classroom with a few simple precautions. The use of these products is recommended by the CDPH if:

- Students are taught about the importance of hand hygiene practices in the control of communicable disease.
- In elementary school classrooms, alcohol-based hand sanitizers are used under the direction of a teacher or other school employee.
- In secondary schools, alcohol-based hand sanitizers are available in wall dispensers that are readily visible to a teacher, convenient for use by students, and able to be secured after school hours.
- There is a procedure in place to monitor the occurrence of allergic reactions; if a student appears to develop an allergic reaction to an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, advise the student to discontinue using the product and instead wash hands with soap and water, and notify the school nurse and parent of the possible allergic reaction.
- All alcohol-based hand sanitizer products are kept away from contact with the eyes, mouth, and nose.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are kept away from any type of open flame or where sparks could be generated; smokers should not light a cigarette until their hands are completely dry after use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer

For additional information on hand hygiene and hand sanitizers, please visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/features/handhygiene>.