

# SDA PRODUCT FACT SHEET

## HAND HYGIENE

### Hand Hygiene Products

Products formulated to clean hands and/or kill germs on hands at home and on-the-go.

#### CLEANING ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS!

Hand hygiene has been an important practice for centuries. And, since its establishment in 1926, The Soap and Detergent Association has been a leader in educating the public about hand hygiene and its impact on preventing illness. According to the World Health Organization, “Hand hygiene is the primary measure to reduce infections ...”

#### Just imagine what life would be like if we didn't clean our hands ...

##### It's Monday morning ...

You catch the early train to work. Taking public transportation is a great way to meet a lot of new, interesting people, but opening a door or holding that handrail can also put you “in touch” with many of their germs!

##### You arrive at your office ...

To your pleasant surprise, the company tech person is installing your new email program! The only thing is, she has a cold. After a couple of sniffles, coughs, and keystrokes, she “hands” you your keyboard and says, “login, please.” Instead of “you've got mail,” you've got germs!

##### Later on, your boss treats you to lunch to celebrate your big promotion ...

He sneezes just before shaking your hand – *Ka-ching* turns into *Ka-chew*!

##### After work, you remember you have to pick up the chicken for dinner ...

You stop at the local market, and grab the handle of the first shopping cart in sight. Then, *squish!* Your hands are covered in baby drool, a *surprise* left over from the previous “little” customer.

##### Having second thoughts about that chicken dinner?

As you can see, there's plenty of opportunity for germs to sneak up on us when we least expect them. But, frequent and proper hand hygiene can stop germs and illness in their tracks. Read on to find out how hand cleaning products can help!

## PRODUCTS

Hand hygiene products come in many forms – each having its own benefits. Look for easy, convenient, portable, and refillable packaging options. Select the form that best suits your needs.

- **Bar Soaps:** Designed to clean the skin by removing dirt and oils.
- **Hand Sanitizers:** Designed to kill germs on hands that are not visibly dirty, without the need for water or towels.
- **Liquid or Foaming Hand Soaps:** Designed to dispense a single “dose” for cleaning hands.
- **Wipes:** Designed to wipe away dirt from hands.

**Remember to Read the Label!** Product labels may contain information about ingredients, proper use and other useful information, such as how to contact the product manufacturer with questions.

## INGREDIENTS

Ingredients may be listed on product packaging. The following are common ingredients used in many hand hygiene products. Not all products contain all ingredients.

- **Cleaning Agents/Surfactants:** *Lift* dirt and soil and help *remove* germs from hands.
- **Moisturizers:** Leave hands feeling soft and smooth.
- **Fragrances:** Give consumers a choice of pleasing scents.
- **Antibacterial/Germ-killing Agents:** Help *kill* germs that may cause odors or illness. Some of the more frequently used ingredients are:
  - Triclocarban – used in bar soaps
  - Triclosan – used in bar and liquid soaps
  - Alcohol – used in hand sanitizers and hand wipes
  - Benzalkonium chloride – used in hand sanitizers and hand wipes
  - Benzethonium chloride – used in hand sanitizers and hand wipes

## SAFETY FIRST

- Always read and follow instructions on all products before using.
- Avoid contact with eyes. In case of eye contact, flush with water.
- Hand hygiene products are intended for external use only. If swallowed, get medical help or call the number on the product label or the U.S. Poison Control Center's toll-free hotline at **1-800-222-1222**. To locate a provincial Poison Control Center in Canada, visit [www.healthycleaning101.org/english/safety.html](http://www.healthycleaning101.org/english/safety.html).



## DIRECTIONS FOR USE

Cleaning your hands when soap and running water are available:

- Wet hands with warm, running water – prior to reaching for soap (bar or liquid form). This applies to most products; however, some foaming hand washes should be applied to dry hands.
- Move hands away from the water, and make a lather by rubbing hands together.
- Be sure to wash the front and back of hands, between fingers, around and under nails for 15 seconds or more.
- Rinse hands well under warm, running water.
- Dry hands thoroughly with a clean paper or cloth towel or air dryer.

Here are some critical times to clean your hands:

- Before and after meals and snacks
- Before and after preparing food, especially raw meat, poultry, or seafood
- Before caring for young children
- After using the restroom
- After touching animals
- After touching a public surface
- When hands are dirty
- When you or someone around you is ill

Cleaning your hands when soap and running water aren't convenient:

**Hand Sanitizers:**

- Use one or two squirts or pumps of the product.
- Rub hands together briskly, including the front and back, between fingers, around and under nails until hands are dry.

**Wipes:**

- Wipe all areas of hands until they are visibly clean.
- Use one or more wipes and dispose in an appropriate trash container.
- Let hands air dry.

## DISPOSAL

- Use all of the product.
- Some hand hygiene products, such as liquid soaps, are packaged in refillable containers.
- In general, liquids can be poured down the drain.
- Dispose of bar soaps and wipes in the trash, do not flush down the toilet.
- When disposing of empty containers, check the recycling symbols on your container and your local recycling regulations.

## SMART CLEANING: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: When should I use antibacterial vs. non-antibacterial products?**

**A:** Antibacterial soaps and hand sanitizers are designed to offer the extra protection of killing germs, so it's best to use them in situations when you are most concerned about germs, such as preparing food, when you or others are ill, or when touching or cleaning after pets.

**Q: Do hand sanitizers really help kill germs? When should I use them?**

**A:** Hand sanitizers are an easy, portable way to help kill germs on hands, but they are not designed to remove dirt or grime. Hand sanitizers are a good alternative to use when soap and water aren't available.

The convenience and ease-of-use of instant hand sanitizers can enable everyone to get rid of germs on hands more frequently throughout the day. Several studies<sup>1</sup> show that the use of hand sanitizers reduces absenteeism in schools due to illnesses, as well as decreases the incidences of hospital-associated infections.

**Q: Are hand soaps, sanitizers, and wipes safe for children?**

**A:** When used as directed, hand hygiene products are safe for children. Keep in mind, when using personal care products, young children should be supervised. In addition, supervising adults should be sure to read and follow instructions on all products before use.

**Q: Why is handwashing important and where can I learn more?**

**A:** Handwashing is one of the most important steps to stop the spread of infection. A recent study<sup>2</sup> shows that simple handwashing with soap can reduce the number of pneumonia-related infections in children under the age of five by more than 50 percent.

For education materials, use the *Healthy Schools, Healthy People – It's a SNAP* program at [www.itsasnap.org](http://www.itsasnap.org) and *The 15 Second Challenge* at [www.healthycleaning101.org/english/hands.html](http://www.healthycleaning101.org/english/hands.html).

### References

1. B. Hammond et al., "Effect of hand sanitizer use on elementary school absenteeism," *American Journal of Infection Control*, Vol. 28, Issue 5, October 2000, pgs 340 – 346.
- J. Hilburn et al., "Use of alcohol hand sanitizer as an infection control strategy in an acute care facility," *American Journal of Infection Control*, Vol. 31, Issue 2, April 2003, pgs 109 – 116.
- DL Dyer et al., "Alcohol-free Instant Hand Sanitizer Reduces Elementary School Illness Absenteeism," *Family Medicine*, Vol. 32, No. 9, October 2000, pgs 633 – 638.
2. Didier Pittet, "Clean hands reduce the burden of disease," *The Lancet*, [www.thelancet.com](http://www.thelancet.com), Vol. 366, July 16 2005, pgs 185 – 187.

This Product Fact Sheet was developed by the Consumer Education Committee of The Soap and Detergent Association. It is intended for educational purposes, and is offered without guarantees or warranties of any kind. It may be reproduced in whole or in part without permission, but with credit given to SDA.

