



VSAAC
Valley Substance Abuse Action Council



You may have heard of teens drinking Robitussin or even Listerine trying to get drunk from the alcohol content inside the product, but apparently the new booze is hand sanitizer. Teens are either drinking it straight up or mixing it with something sweet.

According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, 12,000 cases of poisoning from hand sanitizer were reported last year, and already in 2007, more than 6,000 cases have been reported of children ingesting the hand sanitizer.

Over the Easter weekend of 2007, a Fairfield family called 911 when their young children, ages 3 and 4, became lethargic and confused. The family had recently started to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer and applied it to the hands of their children before meals.

Firefighters determined that the youngsters had swallowed enough alcohol to make them sick. They're better now, but emergency officials urged people to be wary of sanitizers when kids are around. Parents have to understand that only a small dose of a substance is necessary to cause a problem in children," said Assistant Chief Scott Bisson, of the Fairfield Fire Department.

Hand sanitizer is around kids everywhere they turn. It's even required on most back to school supply lists. So they've got easy access and whether they're doing it for attention or trying to fit in, nevertheless it's dangerous and parents need to be aware.

The Purell and Germ-X brands of hand sanitizers each contain 62% to 90 % alcohol (either ethyl alcohol or the more dangerous isopropanol). Alcohol works immediately and effectively to kill bacteria and most viruses. But it also means an average bottle of sanitizer is mostly alcohol. An average bottle of hand sanitizer is equal to about 124 proof alcohol. (light beer is generally 3% alcohol, 6 proof; white wine is about 12% alcohol, 24 proof; vodka is about 40% alcohol, 80 proof.)

Hand sanitizers are dangerous if ingested. The danger is alcohol poisoning. The younger the child, the smaller the amount needs to be to cause poisoning. Babies and toddlers suck their fingers and hands. Sanitizers on their hands will be ingested. Poison control centers have reported almost 12,000 children under six ingested hand sanitizer last year; and, emergency rooms are seeing toddlers and young children with alcohol poisoning from hand sanitizers. Alcohol also causes blood sugar to drop. And, in some cases, the drop can result in death.

If you suspect a student has ingested hand sanitizer, call the *CT Poison Control Center* immediately at **1-800-222-1222**

For more information, contact Lorrie Driscoll, VSAAC Prevention Coordinator at (203) 736-8566

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