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Purell Health Risks

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Purell Health Risks

Made with ethyl alcohol, Purell hand sanitizers don't require water and kill bacteria and most viruses on the skin. According to GOJO, the manufacturers of Purell, ethyl alcohol is a Category 1 active ingredient, generally recognized as safe and effective. However, despite the relative safety and ability to effectively prevent the spread of disease at home, in hospitals and doctors' offices and in schools and child-care settings, Purell carries some [health](#) risks.

Accidental Ingestion

Hand sanitizers like Purell can kill germs, but children may find the clear or colored gel irresistible, leading to accidental ingestion. According to the American Association of Poison

Control Centers, poison centers fielded 11,914 calls about alcohol-containing hand sanitizers in 2006, most of them involving children under the age of 6. Though alcohol-containing hand sanitizers could prove toxic, none of the poison control center calls resulted in death, and even the American Association of Poison Control Centers affirm that the disease-preventing benefits of these hand sanitizers outweigh the risk of accidental ingestion.

To prevent your child from accidentally swallowing Purell, watch him carefully. If your older child takes Purell to school or daycare, talk to her about how to use it safely.

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Dry Skin

When you apply Purell to your hands, it destroys microorganisms on the outer layer of your skin by stripping the outer layer of oil, according to the University of Florida. Though the Purell slows growth of bacteria on the skin, people who use Purell often may develop dry, cracked skin, which increases the risk of skin and other infections, reports the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Nevada State Health Division recommends you moisturize your hands with lotion after using sanitizers to prevent cracked skin that can lead to bacterial infections.

Dirt and Protein Removal

Though hand sanitizers like Purell kill microscopic bacteria and viruses, they cannot remove dirt, fecal matter or other proteins and fats on your soiled hands like soap can. Food and other proteins on your hands actually reduce the effectiveness of these products, reports the University of Florida. If your hands are significantly dirty, you should wash them with soap and [running](#) water, adding friction by rubbing them together, before you use Purell hand sanitizer.

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