

**American Association of Poison Control Centers:
Proper monitoring on use of hand sanitizers
will mean a safer cold and flu season**

The start of flu season - and particularly the spread of H1N1 - means consumers are increasingly turning to hand sanitizers to stop the spread of viruses.

Which, for parents, can trigger another worry: Whether the hand sanitizers they use to help keep their kids safe from the flu could poison their children.

While ethanol-based hand sanitizers have the potential to be toxic, toxicologists and members of the American Association of Poison Control Centers say that with proper monitoring and guidance, the benefits of disease prevention outweigh the potential for ethanol poisoning.

"H1N1 will cause far more illness this flu season than ethanol ingestion from hand sanitizers," said Jim Hirt, AAPCC Executive Director.

As use of hand sanitizers has increased, so have calls to poison centers about the toxicity of such products. In 2005, poison centers reported 9,527 exposures to ethanol-containing hand sanitizers, including 7,772 calls related to children under the age of six. In 2006, poison centers reported 11,914 exposures to ethanol-containing hand sanitizers, including 9,607 related to children under the age of six.

During both years, none of the calls resulted in death, and only two cases, both related to adults, resulted in a major medical outcome.

Among children under the age of six, the vast majority of cases - 9,524 - resulted in little or no effect.

Poison center staff say parental guidance can help avoid misuse of hand sanitizers. Parents who send their children to school with a small bottle of hand sanitizer, for example, should talk to their children about what the product does and how to use it properly.

But those with questions about hand sanitizers – or any product – should call their poison center at **1 (800) 222-1222** for answers.

“Poison centers are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and staffed by medical professionals trained to help those in need,” Hirt said. “Whenever there’s concern about exposure to a substance that may be harmful, immediately call **1 (800) 222-1222** for help.”

The American Association of Poison Control Centers supports the nation’s poison control centers in their efforts to prevent poisoning. Poison centers offer free and confidential services 365 days a year and around the clock.

For questions about hand sanitizer safety or any other potential poisons, call your local poison control center at **1 (800) 222-1222**.