

Dispatch: The Hand Sanitizer Blues

By ACSH Staff — September 13, 2010

A new University of Virginia study [finds](#) [1] that alcohol-based hand sanitizers do not significantly reduce infection rates with flu or cold viruses. Study participants who used the sanitizer had 42 rhinovirus infections and 12 influenza infections per 100 volunteers, while 51 rhinovirus infections and 15 influenza infections occurred per 100 volunteers who did not take any special sanitary precautions.

Lead research author Dr. Ronald Turner believes the very surprising findings indicate that air transmission, not hand contact, may be a more important route of contamination for flu and rhinovirus, though he also notes that hand sanitizers are effective for gastrointestinal disease, especially in third world nations.

ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan adds that public health guidelines that promote hand washing are important to prevent other diseases and conditions.

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[1] <http://www2.dailyprogress.com/news/2010/sep/12/uva-study-hand-sanitizer-little-help-preventing-co-ar-502041/>