

Hand Washing and Sanitizers: Teachable moments

Hand washing continues to be a key role in reducing COVID-19 spread. When COVID-19 started, there were concerns that the virus could be transmitted via surfaces and packaging. This caused consumers to buy cleaning supplies like never before and not using cleaners as directed. As time has passed, the evidence supports that transmission of COVID-19 is primarily through respiratory droplets in the air. Therefore, the use of face coverings, hand washing, and keeping at least six feet distance from each other is key.

For surfaces or packaging to be a problem, there has to be a unique set of events to occur. First, a large amount of the virus would have to be present. Then, it would need to survive long enough to result in spread. Finally, without washing your hands, you would have to touch your face. The few studies done on this issue involved the use of high amounts of the virus, much more than what happens in a real world situation. And, while it proved the virus can stay alive on surfaces, it did not prove transmission.

Excess or incorrect usage of disinfectants can cause skin irritation and respiratory health issues, especially for those with asthma. Always read product instructions and use appropriately.

After a shortage of hand sanitizers, retailers now have an abundant supply. Some hand sanitizers are being packaged in containers that look like food and drinks for adults and kids.

Some examples included packaging in beer cans, children's food pouches, water bottles, juice bottles and vodka bottles. Some are also flavored such as chocolate or raspberry. This can disguise the sanitizer even more to smell like food.

Drinking or eating even a small amount of hand sanitizer can be lead to cardiac effects, central nervous system problems, hospitalizations and even death. Seek medical help immediately.

Bottom line, wear your mask, keep your distance, use sanitizers appropriately, and wash your hands. We can all learn from the teachable moments of COVID-19.

Source: You Asked It, October 2020, Karen Blakeslee, Kansas State University Rapid Response Center

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