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Helpful Hand Sanitizers Can Be Hazardous

(Chicago) - Preventing the spread of an illness seems to be as easy as rubbing your hands together thanks to the popularity of hand sanitizers. You can find these antiseptic gels and foams in schools, daycares, offices and hospitals. Hand sanitizers are quickly becoming the norm for disinfecting hands when soap and water isn't available. Several studies have shown that use of alcohol-based rubs on hands is helpful in curbing the spread of bad stomach and intestinal bugs.

Hand sanitizer gels contain 60-65 percent ethanol, which is the same type of alcohol found in beer and wine. Beer usually contains three to six percent alcohol, wine generally contains about eight to 16 percent and spirits are 40 percent. While a lick or taste of hand sanitizer is not enough to be toxic, a teaspoonful or two could make a toddler intoxicated. Children are especially prone to the symptoms of alcohol poisoning, which may include drowsiness, coma, low blood sugar and decreased breathing.

Some manufacturers are making hand sanitizers more appealing to kids by adding fruity scents and interesting colors to the gelatin-like texture. These kinds of changes could entice small children to taste or eat the toxic gel.

Hand sanitizer bottles are often left on tables or counters, surfaces where any child can easily get their hands on them. It is important to remember that hand sanitizer containers are not child-resistant and usually have an easy to use pump.

The Illinois Poison Center would like to remind you to keep hand sanitizers out of children's reach and always supervise your child when using this product.

Call the Illinois Poison Center at the toll-free, 24-hotline, 1-800-222-1222 if you suspect a poisoning or would like to speak with a poison specialist.

*For more information log onto the Illinois Poison Center website at: www.Illinoispoisoncenter.org

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The Illinois Poison Center serves all of Illinois – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – via a national, toll-free number, 1-800-222-1222. Staffed by pharmacists, physicians, nurses and poison information providers, the IPC provides poison prevention information and treatment advice on household products, medication issues, alcohol and drug misuse, bites and stings and other poisonings. The IPC is a program of the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council.