

Memorandum



TO: All Eastern Management Group

FROM: Provincial Health Shared Services Supply Chain

RE: Hand Sanitizer

DATE: Friday, May 22, 2020

According to Health Canada, data recently released by Statistics Canada shows that there has been a seven-fold increase in sales of hand sanitizer in mid-March compared to last year. This high demand has resulted in shortages of raw materials, such as ethanol, which has led to searches for substitute ingredients. To help alleviate current shortages of hand sanitizers, and without compromising product safety and efficacy, Health Canada temporarily approved specific sources of technical-grade ethanol in hand sanitizer products for use until March 2021.

On May 14, 2020, Eastern Health received a supply of hand sanitizer (**Microsan**) with ethanol. On May 21, 2020, after receiving-feedback from staff about the scent of the Microsan product, Eastern Health reached out to the vendor, who reported that they had temporarily changed an ingredient in the product. This change was made to include technical grade ethanol as a result of the global shortage of ethanol resulting from COVID -19 and was without Eastern Health's knowledge.

Health Canada has completed a [risk assessment summary report](#) on technical-grade ethanol for the manufacture of hand sanitizers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The risk assessment concluded that the probability of serious adverse health consequences is low. The primary ingredient of concern is acetaldehyde which is found in higher concentrations in technical grade ethanol. Acetaldehyde is naturally found in many foods, and is present in cosmetics which are expected to be safe when applied to the skin. The risk may be considered higher if used over a longer duration, mainly via inhalation. For this reason, children, pregnant and/or breastfeeding should not use this product; it should not be used on broken/damaged skin; and it should not be inhaled.

Health Canada has determined that, when used as directed and for a limited period of time, the public health benefits of using hand sanitizer containing specific sources of technical-grade ethanol outweigh the risk of contracting COVID 19 in this current pandemic.

After becoming aware of the product warning yesterday, Eastern Health worked with other programs to develop a plan to identify, remove and substitute the product, starting today. We are also sourcing a vendor for an alternate product (see photos below).

Recent communications from SC Johnson have indicated that they are able to secure some appropriate grade alcohol from their existing and alternate suppliers. It is anticipated that this product could be available for distribution within the next two to three weeks. Hand washing with soap and water remains an effective means of hand hygiene and aids in the prevention of COVID-19.

Please note that the above is not directly applicable to Central Health and Western Health. We are sharing this information broadly given that supply chain is provincial in scope.

Please be assured the safety of our staff and others is our highest priority.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Occupational Health and Safety at mysafety@easternhealth.ca or 777-7777 (line 3, then then line 3).

Current product:



New product for short-term use:

