

The Fight Against MRSA, Flu, and Other Bacteria & Viruses: Hand Washing Versus Hand Sanitizers

METHOD	PROs	CONs
<p>Hand Washing (non-antimicrobial soaps)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proper hand washing is ‘the’ best approach for personal hygiene and decreasing the spread of bacteria and viruses (NYSED). - Good hand hygiene includes frequent hand washing (NYSDOH & NYSED). - Removes visible soil, bacteria and viruses from hands. - Plain soap (without antibacterial chemicals such as triclosan) removes bad bacteria from your hands, but leaves enough good bacteria to protect you. - Schools are required to provide ready access to sinks and soaps; they are already available in schools. - School hand soap is required to be OGS Green Certified, ensuring the least toxic products are used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sinks and soap are not available everywhere (sports fields, field trips, etc.). - Anti-microbial/anti-bacterial soaps: The implication that use of anti-microbial soap for general hand washing is a significant factor in controlling community-acquired infections or “public health threats” is not supported by evidence.
<p>Hand Sanitizer (alcohol-based)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When soap and water are unavailable (sports fields, field trips, etc.), alcohol-based hand sanitizers for MRSA are recommended by CDC, NYSDOH and NYSED. - Portable. - Consultation with the school district medical director and proper supervision are needed when using alcohol-based hand sanitizers with children (NYSED). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not effective when hands are visibly soiled. - Not antiviral. - Not a substitute for hand washing. - Flammable; a gob of it thrown on a bathroom wall can be ignited and will burn. - Potential alcohol poisoning if ingested, especially for toddlers. - Need to keep out of reach of children or to provide adult supervision. - May contain triclosan, a chemical that kills both bad and good bacteria - If always used, students and adults never learn to wash their hands. - Added budget expense; schools still have to purchase soap. - These are not hand cleaners per se and are not covered under the OGS Green Certified Guidelines. - There are no populations outside of a healthcare setting in which consumer antiseptic use has been demonstrated to be more effective than plain soap in reducing infection rates (US FDA).
<p>Hand Sanitizer (non-alcohol-based)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When soap and water are unavailable (sports fields, field trips, etc.) hand sanitizers kill bacteria. - Portable. - Not alcohol-based. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not effective when hands are visibly soiled. - Not antiviral. - Not a substitute for hand washing. - Need to keep out of reach of children or to provide adult supervision. - May contain triclosan, a chemical that kills both bad and good bacteria - If always used, students and adults never learn to wash their hands. - Added budget expense; schools still have to purchase soap. - These are not hand cleaners per se and are not covered under the OGS Green Certified Guidelines.