

Hand Sanitizer Limits Spread of GI Bugs at Home

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BOSTON — Regular use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer in the home can reduce the spread of gastrointestinal infections among family members, Thomas J. Sandora, M.D., said at the annual meeting of the Infectious Diseases Society of America.

And the more hand sanitizer used by a given family, the better the chances of re-

ducing the spread of some organisms, according to the findings from the Healthy Hands, Healthy Families Study at Children's Hospital Boston.

Dr. Sandora and his colleagues provided 155 families that had at least one child in day care with hand sanitizer and hand hygiene educational materials. A control group of 137 day-care families with similar demographics was given materials about basic nutrition only.

The investigators tracked all of the fam-

ilies for 5 months, using biweekly phone calls to inquire about symptoms of respiratory and gastrointestinal illness. The primary outcome measures were rates of secondary transmission of both types of illnesses per susceptible person-year.

During the observation period, 28 of 252 gastrointestinal illnesses recorded were classified as secondary transmissions (time of onset 2 to 7 days after onset in another family member), as were 443 of 1,802 respiratory illnesses. The use of

hand sanitizer reduced the overall secondary transmission of gastrointestinal infections by 59%.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer removes surface germs on the skin. "Alcohol does not contain antibiotics, and you don't develop resistance to it," Dr. Sandora noted.

GOJO Industries—the manufacturer of the hand sanitizer gel used in the study—funded the research study. Dr. Sandora reported having no financial interests in the company. ■

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