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

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| **Hand Washing** (non-antimicrobial soaps) | - 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. | - 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. |
| **Hand Sanitizer** (alcohol-based) | - 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). | - 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). |
| **Hand Sanitizer** (non-alcohol-based) | - When soap and water are unavailable (sports fields, field trips, etc.) hand sanitizers kill bacteria.  
- Portable.  
- Not alcohol-based. | - 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  
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