



SCHOOL HEALTH

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HAND SANITIZER HELPS REDUCE ABSENTEEISM!

Each year students in grades K-12 miss approximately 164 million school days due to illness. Health experts estimate that 80% of infectious diseases are spread by hand contact, not through the air as commonly believed. Absenteeism caused by illness contributes significantly to the costs of lost public funding, school administrative expenses, health care, and parental leave. More fundamentally, it disrupts the students' learning process and development. Teaching students about the importance of keeping their hands clean and providing them with easy to use, effective tools may improve their health and reduce absenteeism.

Good hand hygiene is the most effective way to stop the spread of illness-causing germs. But teachers know it's not easy to get students to wash with soap and water. Instant hand sanitizers provide an effective and convenient solution to hand hygiene in the classroom.

A recent study showed that students using an instant hand sanitizer in the classroom had 20% fewer absentee days due to illness than those who did not. In June 2002 a similar study was published in the *American Journal of Infection Control* showing a 50% reduction in school absenteeism.

The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) supports the study results and implication for raising awareness of hand sanitizing and handwashing in schools across the country.

"This study demonstrates the importance of hand hygiene in a classroom setting. Teaching children the importance of hand hygiene, whether it's with a hand sanitizer or soap and water, can help reduce the spread of infection and the resulting loss in learning days. The results are very promising for school nurses, administrators, teachers, students, and parents across the country." - Judy Robinson, Ph.D., R.N. and Executive Director of the National Association of School Nurses.

(The above was taken from the website <http://healthyhandsusa.com> and cites the studies "Effect of Hand Sanitizer Use on Elementary School Absenteeism" and "The Effect of a Comprehensive Handwashing Program on Absenteeism in Elementary Schools").

In the first study cited students were instructed to use waterless alcohol gel hand sanitizer when entering and leaving the classroom, before and after lunch, after recess, after use of the restroom and before going home. They were also encouraged to use the sanitizer when they sneezed or coughed. The study found there was a reduction in absenteeism of about 20%.

When hands are visibly soiled, soap and water is best, but in many cases the use of alcohol based waterless hand sanitizer provides an easy, efficient, and cost-effective means of reducing infection.