EHS Fact Sheet
Expired Hand Sanitizer is Safe to Use

Introduction

Because they are regulated as over-the-counter drugs by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), hand sanitizers are required to have an expiration date. However, it is safe to use hand sanitizer beyond the expiration date, especially if the container has never been opened.

Manufacturers print expiration dates on their products to indicate when it has reached 90% of it's initial effectiveness. As long as the hand sanitizer has a strong odor of alcohol and dries quickly after applying, it is still able to do its job.

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- **Check the alcohol content-** In order to be effective, hand sanitizers must have a minimum of 60% isopropyl or ethanol alcohol. Even if a hand sanitizer has passed its expiration date, as long as it evaporates quickly from the skin and has a strong smell of alcohol, it is still effective.

- **Keep in mind the storage conditions-** While hand sanitizers past their expiration date are still viable for killing germs, their alcohol content can be diminished over long periods of time, especially if the container has been opened or is partly empty. The alcohol will also evaporate faster if the container has been stored in a warm place, such as inside of a vehicle or in storage areas that are not climate-controlled.

- **Hand sanitizers are regulated by the FDA-** The high alcohol content in hand sanitizer is what makes it a regulated hazardous material. *For this reason, do not pour ineffective hand sanitizer down the drain or put it into the garbage.* If you come across containers of hand sanitizer on campus that you believe are no longer effective, **please contact EHS at (405) 744-7241 or ehs@okstate.edu.**

- **Clean hands are healthier hands-** Don't forget that washing your hands with soap and water, as well as utilizing hand sanitizer often and when facilities aren't available, is an important public health measure. Take care to protect yourself and others from the spread of infection.