

IPC Recommendations for Alcohol-Based Hand Rub (ABHR) during COVID-19 Pandemic

Note: This information sheet was developed to provide IPC guidance for alternate hand hygiene products due to shortages, decanting ABHR related to limited availability of smaller sized dispensers, and maintaining healthy hands during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this document contact Infection Prevention & Control at ipcsurvstdadmin@ahs.ca.

Alternate hand hygiene products

AHS has several alternate providers of hand hygiene products, specifically alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) to ensure supply and access to sufficient hand hygiene products when needed.

- These products must meet the Health Canada [requirements](#) for safety, effectiveness and quality and use the [WHO-recommended Handrub Formulations](#) before CPSM procurement.
- These new products may look, smell and feel different from the products usually supplied; however, they are just as effective in killing and preventing the spread of microorganisms.
- The alcohol concentration in these products may vary. Concentrations between 60% - 80% are the [most effective](#).
- Safety Data Sheet (SDS) must be available for **all product introduced in your area**.

Performing hand hygiene with ABHR is the preferred method for hand hygiene; however, there are times when handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is required. Refer to the AHS Hand Hygiene Policy and Procedure for more information.

Recommended practice for ABHR decanting

Due to the shortage of ABHR containers, pump mechanisms, USP grade ethanol and the supply of Deb Canada product generally, a variety of different ABHR products are being sourced by AHS. The size, shape and dispensing mechanisms of these different products are varied. Decanting ABHR from one container of ABHR into another different style of ABHR container with a different dispensing mechanism or into ABHR containers currently used in the workplace is an option.

Units/areas can determine where and how to store the empty containers and who will be responsible for decanting the product from one container to another.

Both, Workplace Health & Safety (WHS) and Fire & Life Safety (FLS) considerations must be followed before decanting ABHR, which include the following:

Worker

- Dedicated worker(s) should be orientated/trained on the decanting process as per site/unit protocols.
- Decanting activities should be indicated on the staff's HIAC and include all the hazards (i.e. fire/explosion, skin/eye irritation, respiratory reaction) and controls (i.e. safety goggles, apron/gown, nitrile gloves).

Process

- Unit/area should develop a documented safe work process and is followed.
- Following [IPC Cleaning Principles](#), wipe the exterior of the empty bottle with an [AHS RTU disinfectant wipe](#) before putting it in the storage receptacle.
- Do not detach the pump-top from the empty bottle until ready to decant into smaller bottle.
- Do not remove or add ABHR into the 1L ABHR container for the purposes of decanting or refilling the ABHR container.

Decanting Alcohol-Based Hand Rub (ABHR) | 2

Process for decanting from one container to another container

- Perform hand hygiene.
- Don PPE as outlined in the SDS (i.e. safety goggles or face shield, gloves, apron/gown).
- On a clean surface:
 - Wipe the exterior of the empty container.
 - Remove the top of the empty container.
 - Fill container and replace top.
 - Ensure the container being decanted into is labelled with:
 - date of decanting;
 - lot number;
 - worker's initials (if required by site process).
 - If decanting an alternate product into an existing dispenser, ensure that the container is labelled with the alternate product information (WHMIS Workplace Label and product information/directions label).
 - Discard the original empty container as per site process.
- The decanted container is now ready for immediate use or storage in clean storage area.
- When finished decanting, remove PPE and perform hand hygiene.

Location

- Choose a secure, clean location outside of a patient care space that does not interfere with traffic flow to store the bottles.
 - The decanting process should not occur in patient care areas.
 - Do not store the ABHR containers in soiled utility rooms.
- To be compliant with the Alberta Fire Code contact FLS for information about the volume of ABHR permitted in rooms and fire compartments by emailing AHSfiresafety@ahs.ca. Other safety considerations for decanting include:
 - The room should have adequate ventilation.
 - The room should not have carpet.
 - Decanting should not occur near any sources of ignition.
 - The room should have a fire sprinkler system.
 - Ensure there is a fire extinguisher in the area.
 - Ensure spill response supplies are available.

Consult with WHS if decanting multiple and/or large volume containers in a centralized area. Contact your WHS Advisor and/or your FLS Coordinator for more information, if required.

Maintaining healthy hands

Clean hands are healthy hands! Maintaining healthy skin is important to prevent skin breakdown. Some of the new products do not have emollients in them like the products staff are familiar with. It is important to remember to routinely use hand lotion during your shift and while at home.

Additional steps to protect your hands include:

- Drink lots of water, because dry weather dries out the natural moisture in skin.
- Wear gloves or mitts to protect hands from cold air.

Decanting Alcohol-Based Hand Rub (ABHR) | 3

- Use rubber gloves to protect hands from further irritation from chemicals at home (e.g., when doing dishes, gardening, etc.).

The AHS [Hand Health FAQ](#) has more information, including answers to commonly asked questions.

Contact your immediate supervisor if you are unsure whether a product is approved for use in your area.

Report all workplace incidents involving ABHR to WHS via MySafetyNet.