

**To**

Childcare centres, day care centres  
and home childcare providers

**Re**

Use and storage of alcohol-based hand rubs

**Detailed subject matter**

Section 121 of the Educational Childcare Regulation stipulates that a childcare provider must ensure that toxic products and cleaning products are clearly labelled and stored in a space reserved for that purpose, out of the reach of children. The childcare provider must keep that space locked.

**Problem**

Increasingly, childcare establishments are making available to staff and parents alcohol-based hand rubs. However, in order for hand rubs to be used by staff and parents, they must be strategically located, something which section 121 of the Educational Childcare Regulation prohibits establishments from doing.

The Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés requested an opinion from the Comité de prévention des infections dans les services de garde à l'enfance du Québec to find out the level of toxicity of alcohol-based hand rubs and to determine the appropriate storage method for this type of product.

**Recommendations of the Comité de prévention des infections dans les services de garde à l'enfance du Québec**

The Committee notes that alcohol-based hand rubs are an excellent replacement solution to washing hands with soap and water when sinks are not available, to prevent the transmission of infections and particularly with a view to preparing for a flu pandemic. However, in order for these products to be effective, they must be accessible.

In childcare establishments, the use of alcohol-based hand rubs may, however, pose risks of injuries associated with the ingestion and splashes of the product.

The Committee therefore recommends:

- 1) that alcohol-based hand rubs be offered in childcare establishments, but that they be kept **out of the reach of children**. Their use should not replace the washing of hands with soap and water, which remains the main hand hygiene method.
- 2) that alcohol-based hand rubs do not have to be kept in a locked space. However, replacement stocks will have to be stored in a locked storage space.

- 3) that the use of alcohol-based hand rubs by a young child should always take place under adult supervision and on an occasional basis, namely when soap and water are not available.
- 4) that dispensers be equipped with an anti-drip tray if the use of wall dispensers is envisaged.
- 5) that waterless hand rubs have an ethyl alcohol base.

**Ministère's decision**

The Ministère agrees with the Committee's recommendations. Alcohol-based hand rub bottles and wall dispensers will no longer have to be kept locked away. However, the product will have to be kept out of the reach of children at all times.

**References**

- Educational Childcare Regulation, section 121.
- Comité de prévention des infections dans les services de garde à l'enfance du Québec, *Le risque de toxicité des rince-mains à base d'alcool dans les services de garde*, January 2008, 7 pages. The full version of this document may be found on the web site of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux at [www.msss.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca).

**Issuer**

Pierre Lamarche, Assistant Deputy Minister

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**Transmission of the information sheet**

To coordinating offices: please send this information sheet to all home childcare providers concerned.