

Alcohol-based hand disinfectants improve business productivity

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The placement of alcohol-based hand disinfectants in businesses can reduce illness and absenteeism amongst the work force. A study published in the open access journal, *BMC Infectious Diseases*, has found that incidences of absenteeism in public administrations due to the common cold, fever and cough are significantly reduced when alcohol-based hand disinfectants are used by employees.

Nils-Olaf Hübner and a team from Germany analyzed absenteeism and symptom data from 129 participants. He said, "Our study found that hand disinfection reduced the number of episodes of illness for the majority of the investigated symptoms." In the study, the participants were divided into two groups. The control group were told to maintain normal hand washing behaviour, whilst the intervention group were supplied with hand disinfectant and instructed to attempt to use it at least five times during a working day. Disinfectant use was encouraged, especially after activities which were likely to facilitate bacterial or viral transfer, such as toilet use and nose blowing.

Whilst the effect of hand disinfectants in medical facilities and non-clinical settings such as child day -care centres had already been documented, its effectiveness in improving employee health in open community work places had not been assessed. The study also found a reduction in symptoms of illness during times when participants were not absent from work, suggesting that hand [disinfectant](#) use can reduce on-the-job-productivity-losses, increase workplace health levels, and therefore improve overall productivity.

Summing up his findings Hübner suggested that "Hand disinfection can easily be introduced and maintained as part of the daily [hand hygiene](#), acting as an interesting and cost-efficient method of improving workforce health and effectiveness".

More information: Effectiveness of alcohol-based hand disinfectants in a public administration: Impact on health and work performance related to acute respiratory symptoms and diarrhoea, Nils-Olaf Hübner, Claudia Hübner, Michael Wodny, Günter Kampf and Axel Kramer, *BMC Infectious Diseases* (in press), www.biomedcentral.com/bmcinfectdis/

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