

Disinfecting hand gels don't affect swine flu infection rate

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The regular use of alcohol-based disinfecting hand gels authorities recommended during the A(H1N1) pandemic has little effect on the disease's infection rate, according to a study published Sunday.

The findings suggest that the [pandemic](#) virus and similar strains may be most effectively transmitted in the air, rather than by contact with infected surfaces, the authors of the study said.

"An alcohol hand [disinfectant](#) with enhanced antiviral activity failed to significantly reduce the frequency of infection with either rhinovirus or [influenza](#)," wrote the authors of the study presented Sunday at the Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy (ICAAC) here.

Participants in the study disinfected their hands roughly every three hours over ten weeks between August 25 and November 9, 2009. Of that group, 42 out of 100 contracted rhinovirus infections, compared to 51 out of 100 in the control group.

Similarly, 12 of those regularly disinfecting their hands contracted the so-called swine [flu](#), compared to 15 in the control group.

"The hand treatment also did not significantly reduce the frequency of illnesses caused by the viruses," said the authors of the study led by Ronald Turner of the University of Virginia.

The study was financed by the Dial Corporation, which makes various care and cleaning products, including alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

"The results of this study suggest that hand transmission maybe less important for the spread of [rhinovirus](#) than previously believed," the authors said.

"This study suggests that protection from infection with these viruses may require increased attention to aerosol transmission of virus," they added.

ICAAC, the principal international meeting on infectious diseases, has brought together some 12,000 specialists to Boston for presentations and discussions between September 12-15.

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