

# Hand sanitizer: Is more coming? What can you do in the meantime?

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(HealthDay)—Trying to find hand sanitizer to ward off coronavirus?

You're not alone.

Hand [sanitizer](#) has been selling out across the country as the COVID-19 pandemic moves into more and more U.S. communities.

People have rushed to stores looking for alcohol-based sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol, the type recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to kill [coronavirus](#). It hasn't helped that hoarders also have been snatching up supplies in an effort to make a quick buck.

The cleaning products industry swears they are working hard to meet the demand for these products.

"We know that our member company manufacturers of cleaning products and [hand sanitizers](#) are working around the clock to meet the increased demand for these products," said Brian Sansoni, senior vice president of communications for the American Cleaning Institute.

Stores also are taking steps to make sure there's enough hand sanitizer to go around, he added.

"We know that many retailers are limiting purchases of some of these products so that more people are able to purchase them," Sansoni said.

But what if your store shelves have been completely cleaned out? Should you make your own hand sanitizer at home?

As it turns out, the World Health Organization has a recipe for you. It calls for 96% ethanol or 99.8% isopropyl alcohol, blended with glycerin and a pinch of hydrogen peroxide.

The WHO recipe is set up for industrial-size batches; for example, it

calls for 2 gallons of isopropyl alcohol and a bit more if you're using ethanol. But experts at the North Carolina State University have whittled it down to "household-sized" amounts. Here is that [recipe](#).

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration weighed in on the issue Friday.

"We are aware of significant supply disruptions for alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Many manufacturers make hand sanitizers, and several have indicated that they are working to increase supply," FDA Commissioner Dr. Stephen Hahn said in an agency news release.

"Because of an increased demand for alcohol-based hand sanitizers during the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been reports of some consumers attempting to make hand sanitizers for personal use. The agency lacks information on the methods being used to prepare such products and whether they are safe for use on human skin," the FDA said in the release.

But Dr. Greg Poland, director of the Mayo Vaccine Research Institute, said he doesn't see anything wrong with making your own hand sanitizer.

"There are shortages everywhere," Poland said. "In our own stores here, you can't buy it. There are number of recipes, including the one WHO has out, to make your own hand sanitizer."

Some think it's not a good idea, though.

The WHO recipe calls for the use of technical equipment that folks at home simple don't have, noted Dr. Iahn Gonsenhauser, chief quality and patient safety officer at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center in Columbus.

"The tough part is making sure you're mixing something that has the

effective concentration of 60% or greater. To make sure that you actually achieved that concentration, you need something called an alcoholmeter and, personally, I don't know where to find one of those if you don't work in a lab," Gonsenhauser wrote in a blog post.

Making your own hand sanitizer also could deplete store shelves of medical supplies others need, said Dr. Neha Vyas, a family doctor with the Cleveland Clinic.

"We don't agree with people making their own. It decreases the supply of much-needed ingredients such as the alcohol or the ethanol and the glycerin," Vyas said. "Right now, we really do have to be good stewards of our resources."

And forget that idea you had about dipping into the family's liquor cabinet and using the cheap stuff to sanitize your hands, Gonsenhauser said.

"Most of the alcohol products that are out there for consumption don't have a high enough concentration for you to make an effective product," Gonsenhauser wrote. "If you think of an 80-proof liquor, that's only 40% alcohol. By the time you've mixed that with a glycerin or aloe gel and an essential oil, it's not going to get it to the alcohol concentration you need."

Vyas also has a word or two for hoarders like the Tennessee man who stockpiled 17,700 bottles of hand sanitizer and sold them at a huge markup on Amazon before the website shut him down for price gouging. The man wound up donating the whole shebang after the state's attorney general began investigating him.

"For those people who hoard, I say you should donate your hoarded supplies to our medical facilities so they can put them to best use," Vyas

said.

There's one point upon which all the experts do agree—soap and water work the best for cleansing hands, and you should only resort to hand sanitizer as a second-best option.

"It has been shown elegantly with other viruses when you have any visible soil on your hand or any mucous, the hand sanitizer cannot penetrate that to inactivate virus," Poland said.

"When you use a soap, soaps include ingredients that decrease surface tension and literally wash away bacteria and viruses, which have an electrostatic charge to your [hand](#) and sometimes are also attached to the microscopic oils on your hands," Poland said. "Washing with soap and water takes care of all of that. Hand sanitizer cannot do that as effectively."

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [new coronavirus](#).

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