

That's the spirit! Japan hospitals find way to beat sanitiser shortage

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A man in a facemask walks past barrels of sake at the entrance to Meiji shrine in Tokyo

Strong alcoholic drinks can be used "when absolutely necessary" instead of hand sanitiser in Japanese hospitals, authorities said, as supplies run

dry as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

Spirits with an [alcohol](#) proof of between 70 and 83 percent can be substituted to sterilise hands under new rules set out in a health ministry document obtained by AFP on Tuesday.

Some vodkas are that strong, but traditional Japanese tipples such as sake and shochu do not make the grade—at a maximum alcohol proof of roughly 22 and 45 percent respectively.

But some sake makers have begun producing stronger alcohol products to meet the demand for sanitiser.

Japan beverage giant Suntory is already manufacturing sanitiser in the United States, the country hardest-hit by the outbreak.

Under Japanese regulations, liquids designed for disinfection should contain between 76.9 and 81.4 percent alcohol content.

Any more than this is less effective and should be diluted, officials say.

Japan has so far been spared the disastrous outbreaks seen in Europe and the US, but a recent spike in cases—especially in Tokyo—has raised concerns.

The virus has killed 109 people domestically and infected more than 7,600.

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