

Is your hand sanitizer safe and effective?

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Washing with soap and water is the best way to rid your hands of visible dirt and mucus, which may contain viruses like the one that causes COVID-19. But, when on the go, using hand rub or liquid hand sanitizer is the second best option.

There are a lot of different types of [hand](#) sanitizers, but how do you know what products are safe? Dr. Gregory Poland, a Mayo Clinic infectious diseases expert, says there are a few things you'll want to check the label for, starting with the type of [alcohol](#) it contains.

"You want to select a hand sanitizer with at least 60%, ideally 70%, ethyl alcohol in it," says Dr. Poland.

While ethyl alcohol is safe and effective, some products may contain other types of alcohol that should be avoided.

"You do not want a hand sanitizer that has methyl alcohol. Methyl alcohol is a toxin and should not be used. Unfortunately, what unethical producers are doing, in order to meet the demand and sell their product for hand sanitizer, is they're using methyl alcohol, which is very cheap," says Dr. Poland.

Another ingredient to avoid is 1-propanol alcohol, which is also a toxin.

Finally, check the expiration date. Like most products, hand sanitizers become less effective over time as the alcohol content wanes.

"Generally speaking, the ethanol-based hand sanitizers have about a three-year window," says Dr. Poland.

Consumers should check the Food and Drug Administration website to view a list of hand [sanitizer](#) products that should not be used.

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