**Alternate hand hygiene products**

AHS has several new providers of hand hygiene products, specifically alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) to ensure supply and access to sufficient hand hygiene products when needed.

- These products must meet the Health Canada requirements for safety, effectiveness and quality and use the WHO-recommended Handrub Formulations before CPSM procurement.

- These new products may look, smell and feel different from the products usually supplied; however, they are just as effective in killing and preventing the spread of microorganisms.

- The alcohol concentration in these products may vary. Concentrations between 60% - 80% are the most effective.

- Material Safety Data Sheet must be available for all product introduced in your area.

Performing hand hygiene with ABHR is the preferred method for hand hygiene; however, there are times when handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is required. Refer to the AHS Hand Hygiene Policy and Procedure for more information.

**Recommended practice for ABHR decanting**

Due to the shortage of smaller and personal size ABHR containers, suppliers are distributing ABHR in larger volumes than previously used in AHS. Decanting ABHR from larger volumes is an option for having smaller volumes available.

Units/areas to determine where and how to store the empty bottles and who will be responsible to decant the product from the larger bottle to the smaller one.

- Choose a secure, clean location outside of a patient care space that does not interfere with traffic flow to store the bottles. Do not store the bottles in the soiled utility room.

- **Following IPC Cleaning Principles**, wipe the exterior of the empty bottle with an AHS RTU disinfectant wipe before putting it in the storage receptacle.

- Do not detach the pump-top from the empty bottle until ready to decant into smaller bottle.
Process for decanting from larger bottle to smaller bottle

- Perform hand hygiene.
- On a clean surface:
  - wipe the exterior of the bottle;
  - remove the top of the bottle;
  - fill bottle and replace top;
  - ensure the smaller bottle is labelled with new expiry date and add an initial;
  - if decanting an alternate product into an existing dispenser, ensure that the bottle is labelled with the alternate product information;
  - discard the empty, larger bottle into the garbage or recycling as per area/unit protocol.
- The smaller bottle is now ready for immediate use or storage in clean storage area.

Maintaining healthy hands

Clean hands are healthy hands! Maintaining healthy skin is important to prevent skin breakdown. Some of the new products do not have emollients in them like the products staff are familiar with. It is important to remember to routinely use hand lotion during your shift and while at home. Additional steps to protect your hands include:

- Drink lots of water, because dry weather dries out the natural moisture in skin;
- Wear gloves or mitts to protect hands from cold air;
- Use rubber gloves to protect hands from further irritation from chemicals at home (e.g., when doing dishes, gardening, etc.).

The AHS Hand Health FAQ has more information, including answers to commonly asked questions.

If you are wondering whether a product is approved for use in your area, contact your immediate supervisor.