

May 28, 2020
Mr. Dewey Funk
United Nurses of Alberta
700, 11150 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 0C7

Dear Mr. Funk:

Re: Technical Grade Hand Sanitizer

Thank you for your involvement in the discussions so far related to technical grade hand sanitizer and for your email today regarding the use and labelling of hand sanitizer that contains technical grade ethanol. As noted in previous discussions at the PPE Task Force Stakeholder Liaison group, AHS has managed numerous procurement and supply issues during the pandemic, the most recent being the decision by Health Canada to approve and release hand sanitizer that contains technical rather than pharmaceutical grade ethanol. A number of activities are underway to identify and address potential issues with this product.

More detail is included below, but in summary: AHS will be labelling the products prior to their leaving the warehouse, and will post the same information near refillable dispensers. An occupational hygiene study is underway and we will also reinforce with health care workers and visitors that hand hygiene is critically important in health care settings.

Labelling of existing product

AHS will distribute the following label so that it can be placed on containers of Microsan *Optidose* and *Ripshot* that contain technical grade ethanol. In addition, a poster with the same or similar information will be circulated to be placed near any dispensers that may have been filled with this product.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT INFORMATION
MICROSAN [®] Optidose [™] Foaming Alcohol Handrub
NPN80002518
ACTIVE INGREDIENT: Ethanol 72% v/v (technical grade)
DIRECTIONS: Adults only. Apply to palms and rub hands together until dry. For external use only.
WARNINGS: Do not use on broken or damaged skin. Do not use if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Do not inhale. Do not ingest. Keep away from flames and heat. Do not smoke while using.
Report any incident to https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medeffect-canada/adverse-reaction-reporting.html
Questions? Call 1-866-234-2345 to report any adverse reaction. In case of accidental ingestion, contact Poison and Drug Information Service at 1-800-332-1414.



Occupational hygiene testing to augment Health Canada information

AHS has met with Health Canada and has learned that the levels of acetaldehyde in the technical grade alcohol are to be reduced over time by manufacturers. In the meantime, AHS is obtaining objective evidence from an analysis that is being conducted by an external Industrial Hygienist. The purpose of this study is to measure and interpret the occupational exposure to acetaldehyde by healthcare workers, as they use hand sanitizer products multiple times per day. AHS will be sharing the results of that analysis with Health Canada and with other interested stakeholders.

Current supply

Microsan *Optidose* and *Ripshot* products, containing technical grade ethanol, have been distributed widely across the province and are estimated to be within the AHS system for 4 weeks. AHS anticipates that the supplier will be able to provide hand sanitizer with pharmaceutical or food grade ethanol again in 4-6 weeks.

Available alternatives

As is regular practice, AHS continues to explore alternate products from multiple suppliers that contain pharmaceutical or food grade ethanol.

It is important to note that there are definite risks to pulling hand hygiene products and making it more difficult for health care workers to clean their hands. This risk is not only to staff, but also to the patients entrusted to our care. While exercising an abundance of caution with an unfamiliar product, it is important that we do not lose sight of a greater risk – reducing opportunities for staff and visitors to clean their hands. AHS will continue to remind everyone in our health care settings that hand washing with soap and water continues to be an effective alternative to hand sanitizer. Our communications materials will clearly communicate that pregnant and breastfeeding individuals should wash their hands with soap and water.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the health and safety of health care workers. We appreciate our collaboration as we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Deborah Gordon
Vice President & Chief Health Operations Officer (Northern Alberta)
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