

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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Wash or Sanitize?

It seems that a lot of people think that they can skip hand washing. They "just use a hand sanitizer". Those little bottles of gels or sprays certainly are convenient. Just carry one in your purse and give yourself a dab or squirt whenever you want. Head for the kitchen to make dinner, there's the bottle right beside the sink. There's no need to slow things down with soap, water and a towel. Quick- yes, but are they really effective? Often they're not.

In certain situations hand sanitizers are effective. They are enormously effective and important in health care situations. All health care providers should use them as they move from patient to patient, whether it's in a hospital or a doctor's office. But there are a couple of differences between health care and a home kitchen or child's playground. In health care, the nurse's hands are usually clean. There may be bacteria for sure, but their hands are not dirty or greasy. So a sanitizer can work well there. It will kill most of the bacteria if used correctly.

But in a kitchen there is grease. It might be cooking oil or chicken skin, hamburger patties or mayo on buns, peanut butter on toast or olive oil in salad dressing. Oil on hands is like an umbrella in the rain for bacteria. It coats them and protects them from the sanitizer. If your hands have any grease or oil, even just from daily activities, that sanitizer will not get through it to the bacteria hiding below. Happy bacteria!

The other thing we usually have in kitchens is raw protein. This can be meat, poultry, fish or seafood. It can be tofu or canned beans. Raw protein will also make the sanitizer less or not at all effective. Making burgers at the beach, then using a sanitizer on your hands, does nothing. Using sanitizers in a kitchen when you're handling protein foods is not useful.

One other thing that makes sanitizers less effective is just plain old dirt. Dirt itself protects and hides bacteria. Putting a squirt of sanitizer on your child's hands as she comes in from playing does nothing to keep your child safe, unless those hands are washed first!

There's the important step - wash! Lather and scrub for 15 to 20 seconds, rinse and dry.

That's all it takes, as the children's song says, "to wash those yucky germs away." If you don't have soap, wet and scrub well anyway. The scrubbing does as much as the soap does to remove bacteria. Rubbing with the paper towel also helps remove germs the soap and water have loosened. Soap and water also remove any films of oil, proteins or dirt on your hands. Now they're ready for a sanitizer if you want.

When you decide to buy a sanitizer, read the label. It's not nearly as well organized, or confusing, as a food label, but somewhere on there should be a statement about how much alcohol is in it. To be effective it needs to be at least 60% alcohol. Some low-cost sanitizers are only 40% or 50% alcohol, or even less. Those will not sanitize! All they do is take your money and make your hands smell different. Look for products that have at least 60% alcohol. That's the FDA standard.

Remember also when preparing food to wash your hands every time you touch something that isn't food, or isn't what you're working on. If you stop to pet the dog or feed the cat, wash your hands. If you stop to catch a wayward ball at the beach, wash your hands before you go back to the burgers. If you decide to empty the garbage can in the kitchen, wash your hands. If you fix your hair or have a cigarette, please, for your family's health, wash your hands! Whether you use a sanitizer is up to you, but please, pretty please, wash!

Here's a cool and fruity drink perfect for a picnic. If you're headed to the beach make it early and freeze it in a jug. It will help keep your food cold until you drink it all.

#### Watermelon Lemonade

6 cups cubed, seeded watermelon

1 cup water

¼ cup raspberries, fresh or frozen

1/3 cup sugar or equivalent low-cal

½ cup lemon juice

Wash raspberries if fresh. Put watermelon, raspberries and water in blender and process until smooth. Strain through a fine mesh strainer to catch seeds and pulp. Discard pulp. Transfer juice to pitcher or jug, add sugar and lemon juice and stir or shake until sugar dissolves. Chill. Serves 4.

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