

# Methanol Not Effective or Safe Hand Sanitizer or Disinfectant for COVID-19

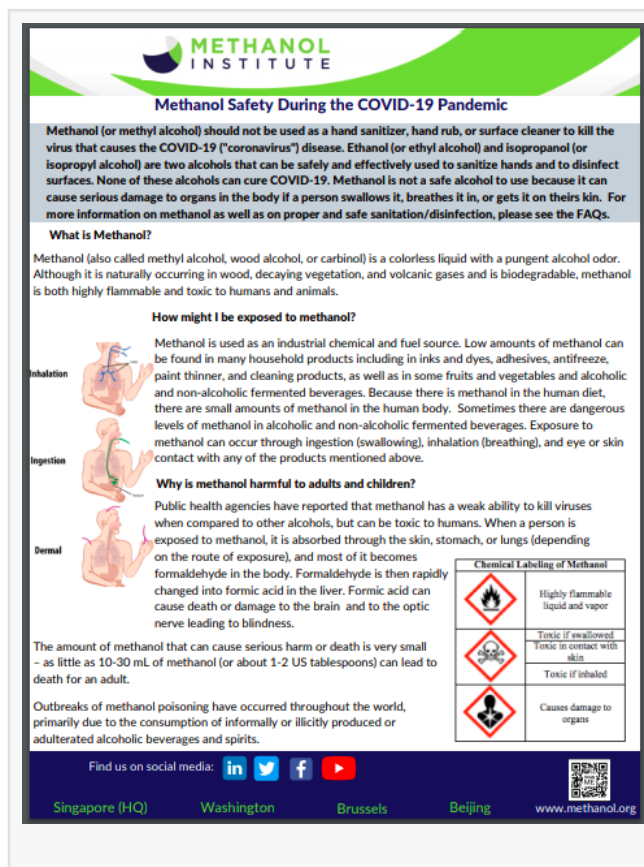
*Methanol should not be used in place of ethanol and isopropanol based hand sanitizers or as a disinfectant to clean surfaces.*

ALEXANDRIA, VA, UNITED STATES, August 4, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As the U.S. Food and Drug Administration continues to update its list of sanitizers containing methanol (available [HERE](#)), the Methanol Institute (MI) wishes to direct the public to our detailed fact sheet and "FAQ" noting that methanol is not an effective or safe product for use as a hand sanitizer or surface disinfectant to combat the COVID-19 virus. Should you find that you have any of the listed sanitizers which contain methanol, please refer to your city or county's Household Hazardous Waste program (HHW) for proper disposal information.

Methanol (methyl alcohol) should not be used in place of ethanol (ethyl alcohol) and isopropanol (isopropyl alcohol) based hand sanitizers or as a disinfectant to clean surfaces. First, public health agencies have reported that methanol has a weak ability to kill viruses when compared to other alcohols and is less effective than other alcohols. Second, methanol is much more toxic than ethyl or isopropyl alcohols, so it can cause bodily harm when it comes in contact with skin, is swallowed, or is inhaled.

Ethanol and isopropanol are the alcohols approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (US FDA) for disinfection in health care settings, registered by the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), and recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) for use in alcohol-based hand rub formulations. Although methanol is an alcohol like ethanol and isopropanol, methanol cannot be used as they are because it breaks down and produces different chemicals in the body. Ethanol produces acetate in the body, isopropanol produces acetone in the body, and methanol produces formic acid in the body, which is more toxic and harmful than those produced by the other alcohols.

The use of methanol as a main ingredient in hand sanitizer has not been approved or



**METHANOL INSTITUTE**  
Methanol Safety During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Methanol (or methyl alcohol) should not be used as a hand sanitizer, hand rub, or surface cleaner to kill the virus that causes the COVID-19 ("coronavirus") disease. Ethanol (or ethyl alcohol) and isopropanol (or isopropyl alcohol) are two alcohols that can be safely and effectively used to sanitize hands and to disinfect surfaces. None of these alcohols can cure COVID-19. Methanol is not a safe alcohol to use because it can cause serious damage to organs in the body if a person swallows it, breathes it in, or gets it on their skin. For more information on methanol as well as on proper and safe sanitation/disinfection, please see the FAQs.





**What is Methanol?**  
Methanol (also called methyl alcohol, wood alcohol, or carbinol) is a colorless liquid with a pungent alcohol odor. Although it is naturally occurring in wood, decaying vegetation, and volcanic gases and is biodegradable, methanol is both highly flammable and toxic to humans and animals.

**How might I be exposed to methanol?**  
Methanol is used as an industrial chemical and fuel source. Low amounts of methanol can be found in many household products including in inks and dyes, adhesives, antifreeze, paint thinner, and cleaning products, as well as in some fruits and vegetables and alcoholic and non-alcoholic fermented beverages. Because there is methanol in the human diet, there are small amounts of methanol in the human body. Sometimes there are dangerous levels of methanol in alcoholic and non-alcoholic fermented beverages. Exposure to methanol can occur through ingestion (swallowing), inhalation (breathing), and eye or skin contact with any of the products mentioned above.

**Why is methanol harmful to adults and children?**  
Public health agencies have reported that methanol has a weak ability to kill viruses when compared to other alcohols, but can be toxic to humans. When a person is exposed to methanol, it is absorbed through the skin, stomach, or lungs (depending on the route of exposure), and most of it becomes formaldehyde in the body. Formaldehyde is then rapidly changed into formic acid in the liver. Formic acid can cause death or damage to the brain and to the optic nerve leading to blindness.

The amount of methanol that can cause serious harm or death is very small – as little as 10-30 ml of methanol (or about 1-2 US tablespoons) can lead to death for an adult.

Outbreaks of methanol poisoning have occurred throughout the world, primarily due to the consumption of informally or illicitly produced or adulterated alcoholic beverages and spirits.

Chemical Labeling of Methanol	
	Highly flammable liquid and vapor
	Toxic if swallowed Toxic in contact with skin
	Toxic if inhaled
	Causes damage to organs

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Methanol is an industrial product that is toxic and should not be used in hand sanitizers and surface disinfectants where there is a risk of exposure from skin contact, inhalation or ingestion.”

*Gregory Dolan, CEO*

recommended by any governmental authority. There are currently no regulatory safe levels for methanol in hand sanitizers or disinfectants. In the United States, products containing more than 4% methanol must be labeled as "poison." In Europe, products may contain up to 5% methanol in cosmetic and personal hygiene products. Methanol is an impurity sometimes present in ethanol, and therefore, small amounts can be present in ethyl alcohol-based hand sanitizers or rubs. Product specifications limit the amount of methanol in ethyl alcohol to 0.5% or 0.2 mL/L. Because methanol is an impurity in ethyl alcohol, it is not listed as an active ingredient on the product label.

Drinking methanol will not cure or protect adults or children from COVID-19 or other viruses, and instead may cause serious harm including blindness and death if people drink methanol or methanol-containing beverages.

“Methanol is an industrial product that is toxic and should not be used in hand sanitizers and surface disinfectants where there is a risk of exposure from skin contact, inhalation or ingestion,” said MI CEO Gregory Dolan. “Fatal incidents apparently from individuals drinking hand sanitizers are both tragic and avoidable.”

This fact sheet titled Methanol Safety During the COVID-19 Pandemic can be found here: <https://www.methanol.org>. The fact sheet was prepared for the Methanol Institute by Gradient, an environmental and risk sciences firm.

The Methanol Institute serves as the trade association for the global methanol industry.

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