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## Alcohol-based hand sanitizers have drawbacks

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SPRINGFIELD -- With flu season on us so much earlier this year, we've heard a lot about the benefits of hand sanitizers. Not all of the information is positive, however.

In offices and schools across the nation, you're likely to see bottles of the gels everywhere. It turns out the sanitizers can do more than just kill germs. On the surface, the sanitizer is good; one brand claims to kill 99.9 percent of germs. The gels come with a drawback or two, however. "Alcohol is really bad for your skin," said Dr. Roger Huckfeldt, director of research for St. John's Health Systems.

There's that, and another quirk, which is also right on the label in the list of ingredients. "It's 63 percent ethyl alcohol; so that's 126 proof," said Jared Webster, a Nixa High School chemistry teacher.

That leads to one obvious concern, if the smell alone doesn't keep you from keeping it away from your face.

"If you ingest it, it can make you intoxicated," said Webster. And then there's another concern.

"The point where it will catch on fire is in the 92-degree range," said Huckfeldt.

As a result, Huckfeldt says some places prohibit using it at all. "That's been seen in schools, prisons, psych wards," said Huckfeldt.

Huckfeldt is part of the development force behind Theraworx, an alcohol-free cleanser "We piled it up and tried to ignite it. We can't make it ignite," he said. That's handy in hospitals where the alcohol base poses a hazard. KY3 | Alcohol-based hand sanitizers have drawbacks |

"They don't want it near the receptacles," said Huckfeldt. As for schools around here, administrators say they haven't had many problems with the alcohol-based products but, in many situations, discourage kids from using it as a primary tool, if just from a germ-killing standpoint "If soap and water is available, that's the best thing," said Bonnie Farley, a Nixa schools nurse. Of course, used appropriately, the alcohol-based sanitizers are just fine but you should know alternatives are available. The Thera-

worx products, developed here in Springfield, are available at St. John's and Grove pharmacies, and online.



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