



## **Sixth Annual Healthy Schools Day in Canada**

### **Back to Basics with Hand-Washing: Say “No” to Antibacterial Soaps in Schools**

Looking for a simple but important action to take at your school or child care facility to mark the occasion of Canada’s sixth annual [Healthy Schools Day](#)? Look no further than the soap dispensers and hand sanitizers in school washrooms and classrooms.

#### **Say “no” to antibacterial hand soaps**

CPCHE is encouraging schools and child care centres to discontinue the use of antibacterial hand soaps, including those containing **triclosan**. Triclosan is considered toxic by the Government of Canada because it harms aquatic plants and animals. Triclosan is known to interfere with normal hormone function in animals, and is suspected of similar effects in humans. Hormones control the way young bodies and brains develop, thus protecting kids from exposure to hormone-disrupting chemicals is of paramount importance.

There is another important reason to stop using antibacterial chemicals. Doctors say not to use household antibacterial products because of concerns that these chemicals may be creating antibiotic resistant germs.<sup>1</sup>

What are the downsides of not using antibacterial soaps? According to experts, there are none. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration states that there is no evidence that triclosan in antibacterial soaps provides any benefit over washing with regular soap and water.<sup>2</sup>

So, on the occasion of Healthy Schools Day in Canada, let’s protect the environment and play it safe with our kids’ health by saying “no” to antibacterial soaps.

#### **If hand sanitizers are used, make sure they are alcohol based and fragrance-free**

Did you also know that some (not all) hand sanitizers – including some of the personal-sized clip-ons that kids carry on their backpacks – also contain antibacterial chemicals? Some also have fragrance chemicals, which often contain phthalates, another hormone-disrupting chemical. Look for products that list alcohol (typically ethyl or isopropyl

---

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Medical Association:

[http://www.cma.ca/multimedia/CMA/Content\\_Images/Inside\\_cma/Office\\_Public\\_Health/HealthPromotion/Antimicrobial-IssueBriefing\\_en.pdf](http://www.cma.ca/multimedia/CMA/Content_Images/Inside_cma/Office_Public_Health/HealthPromotion/Antimicrobial-IssueBriefing_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> US Food and Drug Administration:

<http://www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm205999.htm>

alcohol) as the active ingredient and that do not have the words “fragrance” or “parfum” on the label.

### **Help today’s children develop good hand-washing habits**

Despite all of the new products on the market, experts agree that washing with plain soap and water is the best way to get hands clean. (Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are considered the next best option, but only if a sink is not available.)

Schools and child care centres are a great place for modeling good habits. So, instead of reaching for the hand sanitizer, let’s teach our kids to wash their hands with soap and water. That is the only way to get the dirt off and a proven way to prevent the spread of germs.

[www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca](http://www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca)