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## Surgical Infections

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### Hand Sanitizer Dispensers and Associated Hospital-Acquired Infections: Friend or Fomite?

#### To cite this article:

Simon D. Eiref, I. Michael Leitman, and William Riley. *Surgical Infections*. June 2012, 13(3): 137-140. doi:10.1089/sur.2011.049.

**Published in** Volume: 13 Issue 3: June 19, 2012

**Online Ahead of Print:** May 8, 2012

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#### ABSTRACT

##### Abstract

**Background:** Waterless alcohol-based hand sanitizers are an increasingly popular method of hand hygiene and help prevent hospital-acquired infection (HAI). Whether hand sanitizer dispensers (HSDs) may themselves harbor pathogens or act as fomites has not been reported.


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**Methods:** All HSDs in the surgical intensive care unit of an urban teaching hospital were cultured at three sites: The dispenser lever, the rear underside, and the area surrounding the dispensing nozzle.

**Results:** All HSDs yielded one or more bacterial species, including commensal skin flora and enteric gram-negative bacilli. Colonization was greatest on the lever, where there is direct hand contact.

**Conclusion:** Hand sanitizer dispensers can become contaminated with pathogens that cause HAI and thus are potential fomites.

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