

Alcohol-based Hand Rub: Product Ingestion Risk Screening

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If you have any questions or comments regarding this information please contact the Infection Prevention & Control Hand Hygiene Program at: hand.hygiene@ahs.ca.

Background

Good hand hygiene practices are essential in preventing healthcare acquired infections. Alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) is an effective and convenient tool in preventing the spread of microorganisms. However, ABHR can pose a risk and result in harm, including death, if ingested. The risk can be greater for patients/clients/residents who may not have the capacity to understand the negative effects of ingestion or misuse (e.g. pediatrics, units with cognitively impaired individuals, some addictions and mental health units, and care spaces inhabited by patients assessed as at risk to ingest). The purpose of an ABHR risk assessment is to help identify individuals at risk of intentional ingestion of ABHR and to inform AHS staff and physicians in the development of a patient specific safety plan, if required.

Screening

Substance misuse screen

1. Does the patient/client/resident misuse substances (e.g. alcohol, illegal use of prescription drugs, ingestion of toxic substances – alcohol-based hand rub)?
 - a. Yes – continue with questions below
 - b. No – move to Self-Harm/Risk Screen below
2. Does the patient/client/resident have a history of suffering from withdrawal symptoms (e.g. seizures)?
3. Has the patient/client/resident ever attended addiction treatment?

If the answer to any of the above questions is “yes” initiate an ABHR specific safety plan (see page 2).

Self-harm/risk screen

1. Has the patient/client/resident previously harmed or attempted to harm/kill themselves?
2. Does the patient/client/resident wish they were dead or could go to sleep and not wake up?
3. Does the patient/client/resident have thoughts of killing themselves?
4. Does the patient/client/resident have thoughts of harming themselves?
5. Has the patient/client/resident participated in increased risk behavior involving the thought of causing self-harm or death? (i.e., ingesting harmful substances, excessive speeding, etc.).

If the answer to any of the above questions is “yes” complete a *Suicide Risk Assessment Form* (form #18519) and initiate an ABHR specific safety plan along with an *Addiction and Mental Health Safety Plan* (form #19367).

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Additional considerations

ABHR ingestion can also be a risk to non-admitted individuals who misuse substances or do not have the capacity to understand their negative effect. If ABHR misuse is suspected, contact Protective Services or seek assistance from a healthcare provider, addiction and mental health or [Poison & Drug Information Service \(PADIS\)](#).

AHS safety plan

This tool was developed to support health-care providers in identifying appropriate intervention strategies for patients identified at risk for self-harm. It is completed as an initial plan or a revised plan due to changes in assessed level of risk. Strategies should include potential interventions to address each individual risk factor assessed as either high/imminent or moderate.

The safety plan assesses the following risks: self-harm, suicide and other risk factors. Based on the assessment, therapeutic and safety interventions are identified by the clinician, along with rationale/comments.

ABHR specific safety plan

These interventions should be considered for patients identified at risk for ABHR ingestion:

- Remove ABHR from non-monitored areas (see [ABHR: Dispenser Placement Guidelines](#)).
- Enhance observation/monitoring of the patient/client/resident (e.g. assign a care space nearer to regularly staffed areas, increase frequency of patient/client/resident observation, or assign security watch).
- Provide support/consultation with other services as required (e.g. addiction and mental health, Protective Services, or call the [Mental Health Helpline](#) at: **1-877-303-2642**).
- Provide accompaniment for the ambulatory patient where possible (to prevent access to ABHR located away from the care unit).
- Provide a culturally sensitive patient advisor where possible.
- Call PADIS at: **1-800-332-1414** if ingestion suspected.