

Triclosan, Chemicals Used In Antibacterial Soaps Cause More Harm Than Good



FDA issues a new rule banning sale of antibacterial soaps that contain triclosan and similar ingredients. These chemicals may worsen antibiotic resistance and are associated with hormonal disruption and cancer

U.S. health regulators have issued a new rule that bans marketing of antibacterial soaps and body washes that contain certain chemicals because these ingredients were not proven safe and effective for long-term daily use and may even be harmful to consumers' health.

On Friday, Sept. 2, 2016, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said that companies are no longer allowed to market over-the-counter (OTC) consumer antiseptic wash products containing at least one of 19 specific active ingredients, which include triclosan and triclocarban.

The FDA said that the manufacturers were not able to provide evidence that these ingredients are safe and are more effective than plain soap and water in preventing the spread of diseases and infections.

FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER) director Janet Woodcock [said](#) that consumers may believe that antibacterial washes are more effective at preventing the spread of disease-causing germs, but there are actually no scientific evidence to back up the idea that these products are better than soap and water. Some data even show that the risk of using these antibacterial ingredients outweighs the benefits.

About 40 percent of bar and liquid hand soaps contain the chemicals in question. Triclosan, in particular, is the most commonly used ingredient in 93 percent of liquid products that are labeled as antibacterial or antimicrobial.

There is concern that use of triclosan, which was initially intended for use in hospitals when it hit the market in the 1960s, could worsen the problem of [antibiotic resistance](#). While using soap and water would only dislodge bacteria from the skin, the chemical kills microorganisms. In lab tests, bacteria have already been shown to become resistant to triclosan.

Animal studies have likewise suggested that exposure to triclosan and similar chemicals can potentially disrupt the hormones in the body, set off allergies and is linked with some types of cancer. Although it remains unclear if these effects can translate to humans, these are harm that health regulators have to consider.

"There isn't enough science to show that over-the-counter (OTC) antibacterial soaps are better at preventing illness than washing with plain soap and water. To date, the benefits of using antibacterial hand soap haven't been proven," the FDA [said](#). "The wide use of these products over a long time has raised the question of potential negative effects on your health."

The agency said that washing with plain soap and running water is still considered as one of the best ways to avoid getting sick and to prevent the spread of disease-causing germs.



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