

# Shopping

## Test Drive Hand sanitizers



Robin Harvey

It's the hacking and wheezing cold season — and across the globe the flu season has begun.

Doctors and health officials tell us one of the best things you can do to protect yourself is to simply wash your hands. And in the post SARS universe in Toronto — the use of hand sanitizers and cleaners has become de rigueur at access points to nursing homes, health-care centres, medical clinics and hospitals.

Many of us have them at our own sinks. And some schools keep them handy for kids.

They are even handed out as part of birthday "loot bags" in winter.

Test Drive took a look at a few common ones — as well as a few new ones. We encourage people to try different types, as there are so many that you will have your own preferences and different skin types react differently to various brands. We took the manufacturers' word as far as how well they get rid of germs (the claim 99.9 per cent of germs are killed) and evaluated the sanitizers on ease of application and

### PURELL HAND SANITIZER

**Rating:** ★ ★ ★

Thought of as the original hand sanitizer in T.O. after SARS. It is largely alcohol-based. Has moisturizers and vitamin E but stings a bit when you put it on.

However, the smell is very much like pure rubbing alcohol — after you put it on your hands it dissipates in a few minutes. Repeated use does seem to dry your chapped winter hands. Contains ethyl alcohol. And, as with all alcohol-based sanitizers, it is highly flammable. You must be careful to keep it away from open flame.

But if you want to smell germ-free, this works. It carries the same type of scent etc. you'll find in the dispensers at the entrances to the hospital. There's a problem with the pump dispenser method, though — the gel consistency makes it hard to get the entire amount of the product out of the bottle when you near the bottom of the bottle. This is common among all the brands we tested.

**Price:** About \$4.99 for 236 mL

### ONE-STEP HAND SANITIZER

**Rating:** ★ ★ 1/2

With aloe and ethyl alcohol. It has a very strong, raw alcohol smell. It stings a little more than Purell and dries out the skin somewhat more. Same trouble getting last bit pumped out of the bottle. And, again, it is flammable.

**Price:** \$3.99 for 236 mL



KEITH BEATY / TORONTO STAR

### SOAPOPOPULAR

**Rating:** ★ ★ ★ ★

A new foaming type of hand sanitizer made with several chemicals (Benzalkonium Chloride, Octyl Decyl Dimethyl Ammonium Chloride, Dioctyl Dimethyl Ammonium Chloride and Didecyl Dimethyl Ammonium Chloride).

It is not flammable, however, and is mild on the skin.

Pump out of the top and you get a small teaspoon of foam — and rub it all over your hands and it dissipates into a bunch of frothy bubbles. You need to pump out somewhat less than the other two to clean your hands — about two-thirds or so as much.

No strong smell, no stinging and it gets

rapidly absorbed. A great alternative, but pricier than the others. And it is still hard to pump out the last bit in the bottom.

**Price:** \$5.99 for 100 mL

**Robin Harvey's** Test Drive column appears twice a month. Please send comments and suggestions for products to try to [testdrive@thestar.ca](mailto:testdrive@thestar.ca).