

## The Smart Way Protect Yourself From Bird Flu by Using Germicidal Hand Lotions

One thing that people do to protect themselves from colds and flu is to use germicidal hand lotions.

These lotions are commonly recommended by public health experts at the beginning of every cold and flu season. Almost all common commercial lotions contain isopropyl alcohol.

A company in the U.K. -- Advanced Formulations -- is already marketing a product called No-Germs to people concerned about bird flu.

To be fair, Advanced Formulations created No-Germs to deal with the very serious problem of MRSA or Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus.

When they heard about bird flu, they tested No-Germs against the bird flu virus H5N1. And discovered that it was 99.8% effective against the H5N1 bird flu virus. Knowing a good thing when they see it, they now market No-Germs in England as a way to protect against bird flu. You can also buy it online at their site.

What's the problem with both isopropyl alcohol and No-Germs?

Look at that number 99.8% again. It's not 100%, is it?

And that's the problem. Nothing kills 100% of microorganisms. There're always a few oddballs in every crowd of germs who just happen to have a genetic resistance to anything you throw at them. A select few have the biochemical capacity to bind to the antibiotic and so render it harmless to them. Or some biochemical way of destroying the antibiotic. Or a biochemical pump that draws out the antibiotic.

A few always survive. They continue to multiply and divide -- and so their descendants inherit the resistance. And so you have dangerous bacteria that laugh at your strongest antibiotics.

Look at it this way. What if the Earth were invaded by some race of aliens who wanted to wipe out humanity. So they unleashed a sophisticated bioweapon that destroyed every homo sapien with black, brown or blue eyes?

That would kill a huge percentage of the population -- but not the people with green eyes or albinos with red eyes.

The only way to kill everybody would be to destroy the entire planet.

We could kill every germ inside ourselves simply by blowing ourselves up, but obviously that's not a desirable option.

The process of creating antibiotic-resistant bacteria and viruses that resist antibiotics and germicides has been going on in hospitals for decades. And it's why hospitals, nursing home and other medical treatment facilities are the worst places to catch an infection in.

Because those are the places which have attacked germs the most -- forcing them to evolve into antibiotic and germicide-resistant varieties.

Does that mean hospitals and nursing home shouldn't fight against harmful bacteria and viruses? Obviously not.

When you have a medical problem you must balance potential gain against potential risk.

When you have a life-threatening bacterial infection, take the antibiotic.

But if you take antibiotics every time you blow your nose . . . Or what's even worse but it's frighteningly common, you take them simply to prevent infections . . . you are encouraging the development of bacteria inside you that can resist antibiotics.

And that makes it more difficult for people who get a similar infection in future -- including perhaps yourself -- to defeat it.

That is what alcohol and now No-Germs can do to your hands. All skin has bacteria on it -- which will not harm you. You are safe as long as the normal skin bacteria far outnumber any disease-causing bacteria.

But apply isopropyl alcohol or No-Germs -- and you kill the normal bacteria. You are yjrm clearing the way for germicidal resistant and harmful bacteria to grow like weeds in a newly plowed garden.

Sometimes this is the lesser of two evils. Do consider using isopropylalcohol or No-Germs on your hands when:

1. You are a health care worker or anybody else in close contact with bird flu victims.
2. You're caring for a bird flu patient at home.
3. You're visiting someone in a hospital or nursing home. Apply lotion to your hands going in to protect the patients. Apply it to your hands after you leave, to protect you.
4. You handle dead birds or anything suspected of bird flu or anything for that matter that might have harmful bacteria or viruses of any kind.
5. You know that you're touching door knobs or other objects recently touched by someone with bird flu. This could be at your work place or at home.

For most people, the best protection is still ordinary soap and water.

Wash your hands thoroughly several times a day, as well as before eating and after using the bathroom -- of course. Wash your hands for at least 30 seconds at a time.

This cleans them of harmful bacteria and viruses just as effectively as anything else -- without encouraging the evolution of germicide-resistant bacteria.

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#### About the Author

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