

# THE INCREASE IN ALCOHOL-BASED HAND SANITIZERS POISONING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN RIO GRANDE DO SUL, BRAZIL

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## RESUMO

**Introduction:** With the emergence of SARS-CoV-2 and its rapid spread that evolved into a pandemic, it was necessary to take measures to contain the contamination of the population, such as social distancing, use of masks, and hand sanitizer for hygiene. This fact led to the huge increased use of alcohol gel, presenting a health risk, becoming possible to cause accidents. The poisonings by 70% alcohol-based hand sanitizers have consequences and can provoke headaches, blurred vision, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, loss of coordination, and decreased level of consciousness. **Objectives:** Analyze characteristics of cases of alcohol-based hand sanitizer intoxication treated by Toxicological Information Center of Rio Grande do Sul (CIT/RS) during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Methods:** Data from cases of alcohol-based hand sanitizer poisoning were obtained through IBM® Cognos Analytics software, which collected information from the CIT<sup>online</sup> system, from CIT/RS, during the COVID-19 pandemic (from March to October) comparing with an average of 5 years ago. The analyzed variables were: age, sex, circumstance, local of exposure, route of exposure, and case development. **Results:** In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, 52 cases were registered, with the average of the last 5 years being 10.6 cases per year. Individual accidents accounted for 82.7% of cases in 2020, with an increase of 78.6% compared to previous years. Of these 52 cases, 75% were with children up to 14 years old, but, in particular, from 1 to 4 years old represents 46% of the cases. It is interesting to note that the gender factor did not differ, 27 were women and 25 were men. Also, the most frequent route of exposure was oral, with 44 cases (84.6%), followed by ocular, with 5 cases (9.6%). The residence was the place of exposure with the highest incidence, representing 74% of the cases. Fortunately, most cases have had a cure or purported cure. **Conclusion:** The results are alarming and worrying. During the pandemic and quarantine of COVID-19, the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers increased, consequently, it was noticed that intoxications also raised. In this scenario, we can define and predict a profile about this intoxication: child, up to 14 years old, at home, had oral exposure due to individual accident. Based on these data, we can implement safety and health protection measures to contain the increased incidence of these cases.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** COVID-19, Epidemiology, Hand-sanitizer, Poisoning.

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