

The Medical Letter®

On Drugs and Therapeutics

Published by The Medical Letter, Inc. • 1000 Main Street, New Rochelle, NY 10801 • A Nonprofit Publication

Volume 49 (Issue 1253)
January 29, 2007

www.medicalletter.org

IN BRIEF

Clarification: Hand Hygiene and CDAD

In the recent Medical Letter article on the treatment of *Clostridium difficile*-associated disease (CDAD) we wrote: "Healthcare workers caring for patients with *C. difficile* infection should follow contact isolation precautions, especially use of gloves and hand washing with soap and water after glove removal. Alcohol-based products such as hand sanitizers will not eradicate *C. difficile* spores."¹ One reader pointed out that alcohol-based products do eradicate some *C. difficile* spores and have been invaluable against other pathogens.

In an unpublished study available as an abstract, both alcohol-based hand gels and chlorhexidine washes reduced the number of *C. difficile* spores on contaminated hands, but chlorhexidine was more effective (8 spores/cm² remaining vs. 30-44 spores/cm² with 3 formulations of alcohol-based hand gels).² A previous study showed that chlorhexidine was not different from soap in removal of spores.³ Alcohol itself should have no effect on spores (purified spores are frequently stored in alcohol), but the mechanical action of washing hands with alcohol-based products may be effective in removing them. The CDC has recommended that healthcare workers caring for patients with known or suspected CDAD use contact precautions and perform hand hygiene with either an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water, except in an outbreak setting, where exclusive use of soap and water should be considered.⁴

1. Treatment of *Clostridium difficile*-associated disease (CDAD). *Med Lett Drugs Ther* 2006; 48:89.
2. J Leischner et al. Effect of alcohol hand gels and chlorhexidine hand wash in removing spores of *Clostridium difficile* (CD) from hands. Intersci Conf Antimicrob Agent Chemother (ICAAC), Washington, DC 2005, abstract LB-29-2005.
3. K Bettin et al. Effectiveness of liquid soap vs. chlorhexidine gluconate for the removal of *Clostridium difficile* from bare hands and gloved hands. *Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol* 1994; 15:697.
4. CDC. *Clostridium difficile* information for healthcare providers (www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/id_CdiffFAQ_HCP.html; accessed January 22, 2007).

Coming Soon in *The Medical Letter*:
Proton Pump Inhibitors for GERD in Children
Continuous Glucose Monitoring
Paliperidone (*Invega*) for Schizophrenia

Coming Soon in *Treatment Guidelines*:
Drugs for Cognitive Loss and Dementia – Feb 2007
Drugs for Tuberculosis – March 2007

The Medical Letter®
On Drugs and Therapeutics

EDITOR: Mark Abramowicz, M.D.
DEPUTY EDITOR: Gianna Zuccotti, M.D., M.P.H., Weill Medical College of Cornell University
EDITOR, DRUG INFORMATION: Jean-Marie Pflomm, Pharm.D.
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, DRUG INFORMATION: Nina H. Cheigh, Pharm.D.
ADVISORY BOARD:
Jules Hirsch, M.D., Rockefeller University
James D. Kenney, M.D., Yale University School of Medicine
Richard B. Kim, M.D., University of Western Ontario
Gerald L. Mandell, M.D., University of Virginia School of Medicine
Hans Meinertz, M.D., University Hospital, Copenhagen
Dan M. Roden, M.D., Vanderbilt University School of Medicine
F. Estelle R. Simons, M.D., University of Manitoba
Neal H. Steigbigel, M.D., New York University School of Medicine
EDITORIAL FELLOWS:
Vanessa K. Dalton, M.D., M.P.H., University of Michigan Medical School
Eric J. Epstein, M.D., Albert Einstein College of Medicine
DRUG INTERACTIONS FELLOW: Emily Ung, BScPhm, Children's Hospital of Western Ontario
SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Donna Goodstein, Amy Faucard
ASSISTANT EDITORS: Cynthia Macapagal Covey, Tracy Shields
MANAGING EDITOR: Susie Wong
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR: Cheryl Brown
VP FINANCE & OPERATIONS: Yosef Wissner-Levy

Founded in 1959 by
Arthur Kallet and Harold Aaron, M.D.

Copyright and Disclaimer: The Medical Letter is an independent nonprofit organization that provides health care professionals with unbiased drug prescribing recommendations. The editorial process used for its publications relies on a review of published and unpublished literature, with an emphasis on controlled clinical trials, and on the opinions of its consultants. The Medical Letter is supported solely by subscription fees and accepts no advertising, grants or donations. The content of The Medical Letter is controlled by the Editor, who declares no conflict. The members of the Advisory Board are required to disclose any potential conflict of interest.

No part of the material may be reproduced or transmitted by any process in whole or in part without prior permission in writing. The editors do not warrant that all the material in this publication is accurate and complete in every respect. The editors shall not be held responsible for any damage resulting from any error, inaccuracy or omission.

Subscription Services

Mailing Address:

The Medical Letter, Inc.
1000 Main Street
New Rochelle, NY 10801-7537

Customer Service:

Call: 800-211-2769 or 914-235-0500
Fax: 914-632-1733
Web Site: www.medicalletter.org
E-mail: custserv@medicalletter.org

Permissions:

To reproduce any portion of this issue, please e-mail your request to: permissions@medicalletter.org

Subscriptions (US):

1 year - \$89; 2 years - \$151;
3 years - \$214. \$44.50 per year for students, interns, residents and fellows in the US and Canada.
CME: \$44 for 26 credits.

E-mail site license inquiries to:

info@medicalletter.org or call 800-211-2769 x315.

Special fees for bulk subscriptions. Special classroom rates are available. Back issues are \$12 each. Major credit cards accepted.

Copyright 2007. ISSN 1523-2859