

## Purell Launches a “Green” Hand Sanitizer

By BC Upham

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I want to kill two birds with one stone in this post. The first is to let everyone know there is, at long last, an eco-certified hand

sanitizer.

The second is to clear up a common misconception about hand sanitizers, one I held myself until I did some research for this story.

But first, the exciting announcement from Purell: the watery gel everyone from Dick Cheney to Barack Obama uses to keep their hands “99.9%” germ-free is now available in a biodegradable formula made from 100 percent renewable plant-based ethanol in a completely recyclable PET plastic container. Whew!

The whole package has been certified by Ecologo, which confirms that the product meets its recently released “Instant Hand Antiseptic Products standard.” Accord to Joe Kanfer, CEO of GOJO, maker of Purell, it is the world’s first hand sanitizer to received certification from an independent eco-labeling program.

The new product’s light-weight packaging uses 30 percent less material, saving 250 tons of plastic a year.

### **Drug-resistant bacteria?**

What immediately jumps to mind when I think of Purell is a mass-marketed irrational fear of germs that is directly contributing to the creation of antimicrobial-resistant superbugs.

Well, it turns out I am only half right. It is unlikely that Purell and other alcohol-based consumer antimicrobials are nurturing killer bacteria. For germs to develop resistance to a substance they need “prolonged exposure” to it. But the active ingredient in Purell, ethanol, evaporates quickly (a phenomenon anyone who has used it knows: one second you’re wondering how you’re going to this goop off your hands, the next it’s gone).

A scientific article on the subject found “no documented resistance associated with alcohol-based hand sanitizers” and “the potential for such resistance remains widely doubted.”

As for whether Purell is mass-marketing germ paranoia, it should also be pointed out that washing your hands is the number one doctor recommended way to prevent infections.

So bring on the Purell — safe, clean and now, environmentally friendly.