

HOW SAFE ARE ANTIMICROBIALS?

Whether used as disinfectants or sanitizers, antimicrobials help kill or slow the spread of microorganisms such as bacteria and viruses. **The following explains how antimicrobials are monitored for your safety.**

REGULATORY OVERSIGHT

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Antimicrobials Division of the Office of Pesticide Programs is wholly devoted to evaluating antimicrobials used on environmental surfaces. Whether a disinfectant wipe or spray or solution, EPA approval is required before any antimicrobial can be marketed, sold, or distributed. [link to EPA antimicrobial regulation web site.]

The law governing antimicrobials is called the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, or FIFRA. Antimicrobials are "pesticides" and FIFRA applies to pesticides used for agricultural and non-agricultural purposes, including the home. Under FIFRA, the EPA will only approve antimicrobials if they have no "unreasonable adverse effects" on people or the environment. For antimicrobials that may leave a residue on food, even stricter standards apply. These products can only be approved if they pose "reasonable certainty of no harm," even considering the most sensitive sub-populations such as children.

Before an antimicrobial product is marketed or sold, and periodically after initial approval, EPA conducts this risk evaluation. The evaluation is based on an extensive database of scientific studies on the active ingredients and specific formulation of the product. If the EPA is convinced an antimicrobial meets the FIFRA standard, it grants a "registration," which is the right to sell the product. The registration takes the form of an official product label that the EPA approves. The label contains appropriate directions and caution statements. Childresistant packaging is also required for antimicrobials that can pose a risk to children.

After a product is marketed, manufacturers of antimicrobials must notify the EPA of any adverse effects they become aware of. The EPA considers this information in its periodic reevaluations of registered products and takes action to further ensure safety if warranted.

Additionally, any antimicrobials used in and on living things, such as hand sanitizers, are regulated by other government agencies such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

This comprehensive regulatory scheme ensures that antimicrobials can deliver their very substantial benefits to the public without adverse effects. **Additional information on skin sanitizing products can be found on the FDA website [insert link].**

Both federal agencies work to ensure the safety of the products you use!

LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

Antimicrobials are governed by strict legislation. Examples:

Under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), the **EPA must register all antimicrobials sold in the U.S.**

The Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA) authorizes the **EPA to set tolerances, or maximum residue limits, for pesticide residues on foods.**

ENFORCEMENT

The law means nothing without compliance. Thus, the **EPA Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance continues to follow and manage products when they are on the market.** Additionally, sales of unregistered or misbranded pesticides are unlawful – further protecting you, your family and the environment.

