

February 18, 2021

Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Dr. Walensky:

We are a group of infection prevention experts and medical professionals who have joined together to raise awareness about the benefits of nasal decolonization as a vital component of infection prevention programs. The nose is a recognized reservoir for infection-causing pathogens and, as such, acts as a portal for disease transmission. We propose that nasal decolonization, also called sanitizing the nose, should be recommended not only within the health care industry, but to the public by the CDC and other agencies to help protect against the harmful spread of pathogenic germs.

Currently, nasal decolonization is recommended by the CDC for health care settings and is in use by thousands of hospitals to reduce infection risk for surgical patients and others at high risk.<sup>1</sup> It has been demonstrated in numerous cases that implementing broad nasal decolonization protocols in the health care setting has reduced patient morbidity and mortality, length of stay due to infection-related complications, as well as hospital readmissions.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, nasal decolonization is shown to reduce secondary bacterial infections associated with influenza infection and—in some cases—COVID-19 infection.<sup>3,4</sup> In the interest of public health, our goal is to advocate for the critical role federal policymakers can play in promoting the widespread adoption of this essential hygiene practice.

There are now over-the-counter, FDA-regulated, topical nasal antiseptics, including an alcohol-based nasal antiseptic, proven to kill organisms on the skin of the nasal vestibule in the same manner as hand sanitizer kills organisms on the hands.<sup>5</sup> The nasal vestibule is the primary reservoir for colonization of *Staphylococcus aureus*, including both sensitive (MSSA) and resistant (MRSA) strains. Since topical nasal antiseptics are applied to the skin, they are regulated under the same FDA monograph as hand sanitizer.<sup>6</sup> Nasal decolonization interrupts the cycle of recontamination of the hands that occurs each time an individual touches their nose, allowing the hands to once again become a vector for disease transmission.

Agencies such as the CDC have a pivotal role in educating the public on the science behind infection prevention practices like nasal decolonization. Hand sanitizers are now widely accepted as an important infection prevention tool, and the CDC played a critical role in building that acceptance. In 2002, the CDC revised its hand hygiene guidelines to recommend alcohol-based hand sanitizers in the health care setting.<sup>7</sup> In 2009, the WHO followed suit, recommending health care professionals use alcohol-based topical antiseptics to sanitize the hands.<sup>8</sup> Now, a new generation of alcohol-based nasal

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/hai/prevent/staph-prevention-strategies.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1207290>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4947938/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://mbio.asm.org/content/11/4/e01806-20>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/nasal-decolonization-and-hai-prevention-applications-and-evidence>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/information-drug-class/topical-antiseptic-products-hand-sanitizers-and-antibacterial-soaps>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/fs021025.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK144054/>

antiseptics using 62% alcohol as the active ingredient offers a convenient, safe and well-tolerated solution for widespread application. Sanitizing the nose should follow in the steps of such historic agency health initiatives.

Research demonstrates that nasal decolonization is a safe and effective practice to reduce the burden of pathogens, yet it is only mentioned in CDC guidelines for health care providers and high-risk patients at this time.<sup>9</sup> We, as subject matter experts and advisors to the Sanitize Your Nose campaign, sponsored by Global Life Technologies Corp., believe it is in the best health interest of the public to expand CDC guidelines to recommend sanitizing the nose as a routine component of regular hygiene, such as hand washing.

Community-associated and secondary bacterial infections continue to pose a significant risk, and we are faced with the greatest strain our health care system has felt in a generation. It is imperative that sanitizing the nose be recommended as a hygienic practice in complement to other critical strategies to improve health outcomes for Americans.

Regards,

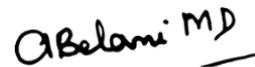
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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.ajicjournal.org/article/S0196-6553\(19\)30319-0/fulltext](https://www.ajicjournal.org/article/S0196-6553(19)30319-0/fulltext)