

Teens using hand sanitizers to get drunk

By Anna Gorman, Los Angeles Times

Six teenagers have shown up in two San Fernando Valley emergency rooms in the last few months with alcohol poisoning after drinking hand sanitizer, worrying public health officials who say the cases could signal a dangerous trend.

Some of the teenagers used salt to separate the alcohol from the sanitizer, making a potent drink that is similar to a shot of hard liquor.

“All it takes is just a few swallows and you have a drunk teenager,” said Cyrus Rangan, director of the toxicology bureau for the county public health department and a medical toxicology consultant for Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. “There is no question that it is dangerous.”

Although there have been only a handful of cases, Rangan said the practice could easily become a larger problem. Bottles of hand sanitizer are inexpensive and accessible, and teenagers can find distillation instructions on the Internet.

“It is kind of scary that they go to that extent to get a shot of essentially hard liquor,” Rangan said.

In addition to the teenagers who intentionally drank the sanitizer, younger children also have accidentally ingested it in the past.

Read the whole story