

Fake hand sanitisers come under scanner again

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KOCHI: The Kerala State Drugs Control Department (KSDCD) recently confiscated hand sanitisers and N95 masks worth Rs 3 lakh from an unlicensed company at Thycaud in Thiruvananthapuram for violating the norms of the Medicinal and Toilet Preparations Act, 1995. The officials said 50 cases regarding the sale of low-quality Covid essential sanitisation products were reported across the state.

Hand sanitisers have become one of the most sought-after products during the pandemic, which has led to its scarcity. This gives room for production of fake or substandard products. Many unlabelled and low-quality products are being sold at higher prices. Saju R, chief inspector, Drug Intelligence Squad, said fake hand sanitisers and masks were also seized from Malappuram, Thrissur, Alappuzha, Palakkad, and Ernakulam. "On Thursday, another case was brought to our notice where low quality and unlabelled hand sanitisers

The materials were seized in an immediate raid. The sale of fake hand sanitisers has been increasing since people are buying the products without checking the label. Usually, the products seized lack a license and other proper details," Saju said.

Hand sanitisers seized from Thycaud were brought from a manufacturing company in Tamil Nadu. The product caused burns on the skin of users, he added. As per the Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940, essential sanitation supplies should be sold following standard labelling and must contain details such as brand, address and contact of the manufacturer. The product should also display the expiry date, ingredients with the percentage of the content, batch number, disclaimers and the manufacturing license number.

The officials highlight that many individuals and institutions have been preparing alcohol-based sanitisers during the pandemic. "Apart from a manufacturing licence number, it is important to obtain a licence for selling these products too," said the officer. The booked firms use high levels of toxic methanol — a cheaper alternative to isopropanol or ethanol — which is harmful to the eyes, skin and respiratory organs. "In sanitisers, the alcohol content has to be 70 per cent or above to kill the germs. The pharmacies functioning under the association were instructed to check if the products have standard labelling and other necessary details before selling them. Public also needs to be more aware," said a member of the All Kerala Chemists and Druggists Association.

Effects of methanol on body

Irritation of skin and eyes

Headache, respiratory issues, seizures, confusion, reduced level of consciousness

Long-term exposure can lead to blindness and permanent damage of other organs

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