

Antibacterial washes may do more harm than good

Antibacterial, medicated soaps and washes are majorly advertised to be the best for maintaining a healthy, bug-free skin. You might think anti-bacterial washes and soaps kill harmful bacteria and germs lurking on your skin. However, antibacterial hand and body washes containing certain chemicals have recently been banned by the FDA (US Food and Drug Administration). They may be causing more damage to your skin, body and the environment and are no better than ordinary non-medicated soaps and washes.

A few valid reasons why you shouldn't use antibacterial washes:

Antibacterials may lead to the growth of Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria: Bacteria cannot be killed by the very low doses of antibacterials present in these so-called antibacterial products. Moreover, these products are typically washed off in less than 30 seconds, not enough time to kill any microbe. Remember, to kill any germ effectively, your physician normally administers antibiotics round the clock for at least 5-7 days! Bugs are smart and with exposure to small doses and short durations, learn and quickly adapt to become resistant to these antibacterials. Later, during actual infections, even high doses of antibiotics are unable to kill these bugs.

Antibacterial washes have the potential to perturb the environment: The common use of these products by millions of individuals causes a huge amount of antibacterial products to flush down the drains. These reach natural waterbodies in lakes, rivers and groundwater. This disrupts not only other natural microbes, algae and fish but many other natural aquatic organisms, resulting in damage to many natural systems.

Antibacterial washes disrupt normal body functions: In animal studies, some of these antibacterial chemicals are found to cause disturbances in

hormones, heart muscle, sperm, brain, and bone. Though these changes have not been thoroughly studied in humans yet, they may still result in minute changes which may have a larger impact over time.

Risk of allergy increases: Your skin contains many kinds of good microbes which not only protect your skin from other harmful microbes but are also good for your overall health balance. By altering the normal flora of human skin, antibacterial washes may alter the immunity levels of our bodies. This may result in development of allergies.

Antibacterial Washes are no better than normal, non-medicated, regular washes and soaps: Plain regular soaps and washes are as effective in washing of germs and for maintaining personal cleanliness as any other specially formulated and expensive antibacterial soap or wash. Also keep in mind that products labelled “organic” or “natural” are not necessarily safe. Simply use ordinary, inexpensive, non-medicated soaps or washes of your own choice.