

## Germ-killing sanitizers could have effect on alcohol tests

Slathering on alcohol-based hand sanitizer every few minutes may have one unintended consequence — a positive screen for alcohol use in certain types of tests, a University of Florida study confirmed.

But UF researchers also uncovered a potential biomarker that could allow tests to differentiate between drinking alcohol and exposure to hand sanitizers and other household products, said Gary Reisfield, M.D., an assistant professor in the department of psychiatry with the UF College of Medicine.

The findings, published in the *Journal of Analytical Toxicology* in March, are particularly significant for people who use hand sanitizers frequently, such as doctors, nurses and other health professionals. For folks in these fields who are in substance abuse programs or required to be tested frequently for alcohol use, chronic use of alcohol-based sanitizers could lead to false positives.

"Many of the hand sanitizers contain ethyl alcohol, which is the same type of alcohol in alcoholic beverages," said Reisfield, the chief of pain management services in the division of addiction medicine. "The body does not distinguish between drinking alcohol and handwash alcohol."

"Anyone out there who is required to abstain from alcohol needs to be very cognizant about alcohol that may be hidden in products such as handwashing gels, mouthwashes, hairsprays and cosmetics," he said. "You need to be careful not just what you put in your body but what you put on your body."

Although blood and breath tests are more commonly used to detect the presence of alcohol in the bloodstream, they only detect what a person drank recently, Reisfield says. Another type of test, called an EtG, measures the level of substances left behind after alcohol is metabolized and can detect use over a longer period of time. The UF study looked at these types of tests, which measure the levels of ethyl glucuronide and ethyl sulfate in urine as indicators of alcohol use.

The investigators examined 11 subjects with no history of alcohol use, looking to see how frequent use of hand sanitizer affected the levels of these substances in their urine.

Study participants used hand sanitizer every five minutes for a 10-hour period for three days in a row, which Reisfield says is similar to what nurses are exposed to while on duty. Their urine was tested at the end of each day and before the start of a new day.

"What we found was nearly all the individuals produced alcohol metabolites consistent with drinking alcohol," Reisfield said.

When comparing the levels of ethyl glucuronide and ethyl sulfate in the urine of people who used a lot of sanitizer with people who drank alcohol, the researchers also noticed that the level of ethyl sulfate was much lower in the sanitizer group, not coming close to the cutoffs used to indicate alcohol use.

Reisfield says looking at ethyl sulfate could help laboratories more accurately pinpoint alcohol use.

"We will be looking at this further in subsequent studies," he said. "Ethyl sulfate may be a critical biomarker that has not been looked at in great detail. It may help distinguish between the exposures."

"We really cannot tolerate false positives," he said. "Falsely accusing someone of alcohol abuse can have potentially devastating effects personally and occupationally."

# CONNECTING TO OLDER AMERICANS

By Kay Louder  
Social Security District Manager,  
Lake City, FL

Older Americans Month is an occasion to show appreciation and support for our seniors as they continue to enrich and strengthen our communities. This May, the theme — Older Americans: Connecting the Community — pays homage to the many ways in which older adults bring inspiration and continuity to the fabric of our communities and highlights how technology is helping older Americans live longer, healthier, and more engaged lives.

Social Security uses technology to make dealing with Social Security easier for seniors. We offer a variety of services at HYPER-

LINK "<http://www.socialsecurity.gov>" [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov). Just look at the "top services" column to the left of the page to see the wide range of services that technology allows us to offer online.

Social Security has a special relationship with American seniors since we pay benefits, at one time or another, to just about every one of them. Nine out of ten Americans aged 65 or older receive Social Security benefits.

Here are some more statistics to consider. Among older Social Security beneficiaries, 52 percent of married couples and 72 percent of unmarried persons receive half or more of their income from Social Security. Older Americans are a growing group, too. Life expectancy continues to rise, and

by 2035, it's estimated that there will be twice as many older Americans as there are today.

Older Americans, as well as people who don't expect to retire anytime soon, who use Social Security's website give it consistently high customer satisfaction ratings. Right now, you can get an estimate of your future retirement benefits, plan your retirement, and even apply for retirement benefits right over our website. Visit us online at HYPERLINK "<http://www.socialsecurity.gov>" [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

Learn more about what you can do to celebrate Older Americans Month by visiting the organization's website. HYPERLINK "<http://www.olderamericans-month.org>" [www.olderamericans-month.org](http://www.olderamericans-month.org)

## Take Stock in Children

Dear Editor:

Each day I work on behalf of low-income and at-risk students to help them overcome the many hardships they face to afford a college education. This is a significant challenge, as tuition costs at Florida's public universities are expected to increase 30 percent or more over the next several years. This fact, combined with the cost of other college-related expenses, creates a serious struggle for youth throughout Florida to achieve their dreams of a college education. What's more, we are currently facing significant cuts to the federal funding of our education system. We must do better so our youth are more educated to meet the challenges of tomorrow!

One of Florida's best kept secrets, Take Stock in Children, is a statewide non-profit organization with a solid 16 year history of providing a unique opportunity for low-income and at-risk students who aspire to pursue a college education. Our role model program identifies thousands of students who sign a contract pledging to remain drug and crime free and maintain a 2.5 grade point average in middle and high school. Students that fulfill these requirements

receive a full scholarship to a state college, university or vocational school.

To date, our organization has provided educational support and college scholarships for over 17,000 children. I was one of those students and was able to achieve my dream of attaining a college education with the help of Take Stock in Children. Now, as we face cuts to Florida Bright Futures and Project STARS scholarships we might lose some of our funding and with that the ability to help more students, like myself, achieve success.

This would mean thousands of deserving low-income students will not be provided the opportunity to pursue a college education. In addition, hundreds of thousands of private donor funds given to

Take Stock in Children for the purpose of purchasing these prepaid scholarships would not be awarded or would have to be given back. We cannot allow these funds to go to waste or let our youth suffer the life-altering consequences of not receiving a higher education.

In working with these students on a regular basis I see their willingness to achieve but also see their doubt that they will make it, as it seems there is less and less opportunity for support. Now is the time that we need our elected officials and business leaders to be the voice for all those who dream of obtaining a college education and living the American dream.

We must rally together and take pride in our youth who are our next

generation of leaders. Education is the key to a better Florida, and we need the support of individuals and businesses to ensure every child who wishes to go to college has the opportunity to do so.

Helen A. Quinn  
Administrator of College  
Transition and Retention  
Take Stock in Children

### Spring Book Sale

There will be a Spring Book Sale at the Lafayette County Library, SR 51 across from First Federal Bank, on Friday, May 20, 2011, 1 p.m. - 6 p.m., and Saturday, May 21, 2011, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
Summer Reading Material



## The Great Suwannee River Race

### Rafts, Canoes & Kayaks

Race From Little River Spring to Ivey Park, Branford  
**Saturday, May 21, 2011**

#### Entry Fees

Rafts - \$45 per vessel

No size requirements, but must have 6 team members wholly on the raft with no parts of the members in the water at the start and at the finish.

2-Man Canoes or Kayaks - \$25 per boat

1-Man Kayaks - \$15 per boat

No vessel requirements/no crew requirements.

Entry forms and rules available at

The Suwannee Democrat 211 Howard St. East, Live Oak and JW Hill and Associates 1105 Howard St. West, Live Oak.

Or

see any Kiwanian or Rotarian for information.

Sponsored in part by the Suwannee County Tourist Development Council

Information: 386-362-3300

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