

Prisoners found drinking anti-swine flu hand gel to get drunk

- Inmate appeared drunk after drinking gel from washroom
- Wardens raised alarm after learning gel contained alcohol

- [Steven Morris](#)
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- [Article history](#)

Hand gels supplied to a prison to combat the risk of [swine flu](#) have been removed after inmates realised it contained [alcohol](#) and began drinking it to try to get drunk.

At least one prisoner at HMP The Verne on Portland, Dorset, was found intoxicated. The Prison Service confirmed that this case was being investigated but meanwhile antibacterial gel pumps had been removed as a "precautionary measure".

Andy Fear, a member of the Verne's Prison Officers Association (POA) committee, said the canisters had been ordered because of the swine flu threat.

"It was subsequently reported by some association members working here that the inmates had been incorrectly using them, for want of a better phrase," he said.

"The suspicion that was reported to us was that some of the inmates had drunk them. Of course some of the officers expressed concerns over potentially having to deal with prisoners who have had a drink."

The Guardian reported in August that the NHS was aware of a rising number of cases of patients with drink or drug problems stealing the £10-a-litre gel and mixing it with orange juice, Lucozade or cola to create powerful cocktails, [including one suspected of causing a death](#).

Tim Roberts, branch chairman of the POA, said the association had raised concerns when it was first announced that the gel dispensers were being placed in the prison, because of the alcohol content.

A Prison Service spokesman said: "On 21 September a prisoner at HMP The Verne showed signs of intoxication, the cause of which will be investigated. Antibacterial gel pumps have been removed from the prison as a precautionary measure."