

Over the Edge

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HOW TO AVOID THE GERMS THAT ARE BROUGHT TO WORK

Going to work every day can be hard enough – but bringing home a cold from the office is brutal! Here are some tips for keeping germs at bay during your day, so that you can have a healthier environment and be healthier in your down time.

Keep the germ hotspots clean. Clean your phone, computer keyboard and anything else that you use frequently. Even if you are the only user, germs can live on these objects and you can re-infect yourself. Disinfecting wipes are extremely valuable for keeping your workspace clean and disinfected. Use them on your keyboard, desk, the microwave handle, the phone — anywhere you think germs might be hiding.

Wash your hands often. This means every time you use the restroom, before you eat, after you sneeze or cough and any other time your hands feel dirty. Also, consider keeping a bottle of hand sanitizer at your desk.

Avoid coworkers who are sick. You would hope that coworkers who are contagious would stay home from work. Unfortunately, this is usually not the case. If they do show up, try to avoid direct contact with them (without being rude, of course).



Drink at least 8 glasses of water a day. Sodas and coffee may help you stay awake, but they will also contribute to dehydration. So you need to be sure to drink water also. Just keep a water bottle with you all the time, drink throughout the day and you will probably get what you need.

Break up your work day. When you are feeling tired or sore, get up and walk around for a few minutes. Or try stretching at your desk. Changing tasks and keeping your body in shape will help you feel better and make you more productive.

GERMS WORKING OVERTIME

Considering the amount of time most Americans spend at work, it's no surprise that offices, factories, and other work facilities are hotbeds for bacteria and viruses.

Germs are lurking all over the workplace. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that up to 80% of all infections are spread by hand contact with contaminated surfaces and direct human contact. So, most of the places we touch and come in contact with are likely harborers of germs.

Not just damaging to the unfortunate individuals who get sick, germs in the workplace can also lead to a drain in productivity. According to the National Health Interview Survey, influenza alone is responsible for about 200 million days of reduced productivity and 75 million days of work absence annually. Here are some of the germiest areas in the workplace and how to minimize infections:

- **TELEPHONES** – Scientists say office telephones can hold more than 25,000 germs per square inch.

To prevent the spread of germs when using the phone, users should wipe off handsets and keypads with sanitizing wipes periodically throughout the day.

- **ELEVATOR BUTTONS** – Protect yourself against dirty elevator buttons by using an elbow or knuckle instead of fingertips to push the buttons if you can.
- **WATER FOUNTAINS** – The spigot on a public water fountain can harbor as many as 2.7 million bacteria per square inch, scientists say. A good alternative to using the workplace water fountain is bringing water from home in a sports bottle.
- **COMPUTER KEYBOARDS** – It has been reported that keyboards may have more than 200 times as many bacteria as a toilet seat. Shared computers are especially hazardous. Using disinfecting wipes that remove dirt, dust, dander, and biological contaminants are good for cleaning keyboards. Since wet materials can interfere with the functionality of keyboards, it's a good idea to check with the IT department.
- **BATHROOMS** – Workplace bathrooms are some of the germiest places. E. coli and fecal toxins are often found on nearly every surface in the bathroom, including doors and faucet handles. To prevent the spread of harmful bacteria, use paper towels to turn faucets on and off and to open the door before exiting.

The top five most germ-contaminated spots (in order):

1. Phone
2. Desktop Computer
3. Water fountains (bubblers and push bars)
4. Microwave handles
5. Keyboard

Although germs live everywhere, taking a few steps in the workplace to minimize exposure can greatly reduce the risk of spreading infection.

One of the most important steps we can take to prevent the spread of germs and getting sick is hand washing. The CDC offers tips on the right way of washing hands, including when soap and water aren't available.

When should you wash your hands?

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet, after changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste. After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage



How should you wash your hands?

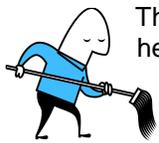
1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap. (Note: To date, studies have shown that there is no added health benefit using soaps containing antibacterial ingredients compared with using plain soap)
2. **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
5. **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.



- Always wear the proper attire for your assignment, including any personal protective equipment required.
- Familiarize yourself with the emergency exits where you are working.
- Utilize safe lifting practices: test the load before lifting, keep the object close to your body, use your legs and not your back when lifting, and move your feet to avoid twisting while moving objects.

Remember, safety is everyone's responsibility. If you have questions about the safest way to perform a job, please contact your Supervisor.

CLEANING ERGONOMICS



There's no need to strain while you clean. You've heard of tennis elbow, but who would have thought you could actually injure yourself while scrubbing the tub? If you're bending incorrectly while cleaning the tub or twisting to get to a hard-to-reach spot in the shower, you can hurt yourself. Doing the wrong thing over and over again takes its toll on your body. Here are some common mistakes people make while cleaning at home and on the job—and some tips for avoiding injuries.

Double kneeling. Avoid kneeling on both knees to scrub the floor, tub or shower. If you have to get down on your knees, try kneeling on one knee and then switching to the other one every minute to minimize the pressure and disperse it.

Bending at the back. When tackling household chores, follow the old saying "bend at the knees and not the back." While your knees are slightly flexed, keep a hollow in your back, the opposite of rounding your back. This will help minimize back strain.

Overreaching. When cleaning windows that are beyond your reach, use a stool or a step ladder so you don't hyperextend your back. Or, better yet, try a cleaning product with an ergonomic handle. Whenever you're reaching, keep your reach just shy of your full arm extension to minimize straining your shoulder and spine.

Stretch when you're done. Cleaning is exercise, and, just like after finishing a workout, you should stretch when you're done. Take a few minutes to roll your head from side to side, stretch your arms over your head, and touch your toes when you're done scrubbing. You'll be glad you did when you're without back pain!



SAFETY TIPS FOR EVERY EMPLOYEE

- Do not stand on chairs, tables, or desks to reach items or decorate your work area.
- Be constantly alert of any potential hazards in your work area such as moving equipment or machinery.
- Follow all safety rules or guidelines.
- Ensure you are properly trained on any equipment before attempting to operate.

Lessons Learned:

PREVENTING SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS



Now that you've asked yourself, "How many times are they going to go over this!" I'll tell you. As many times as it takes! Slips, trips, and falls continue to be the most reported type of injury in school districts.

A heightened sense of awareness should always be used when walking. SLOW DOWN and keep your hands out of your pockets – you will have better balance! If forced to venture outdoors most folks will innately 'pick up the pace' and do so with their hands in their pockets. **Slow Down!**

DON'T TEXT OR TALK ON THE PHONE WHILE WALKING

The cost of injury due to slips, trips, and falls are not only the most reported employee injury - they are the most expensive, too. These injuries can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. Think of the ripple effect of the injury. The injured employee loses time from work. This may cause other employees to have to work overtime to cover the injured worker's job duties. This increases the workload on fellow employees while leaving the school shorter staffed than it already was. The increased workload could also have physical, mental and emotional effects on the staff. OSHA reports that nearly half of the workplace injuries are sprains, strains and fractures from slips, trips and falls.



Although it is very difficult to list all foreseeable slip, trip, and fall hazards an employee might face, it is possible to create a shared responsibility of personal safety awareness. Here are some actions that we, as individuals, can take to protect ourselves as well as our fellow co-workers:

- Practice good housekeeping.
- If you find water pooled in a foot traffic area, notify someone.
- Notify your supervisor of slip and trip hazards if you cannot correct the condition.
- Use the handrails when going up or down stairs.
- Wear appropriate shoes with non-slip soles.
- Ensure that appropriate signage is used to alert staff of hazards.
- Show up for work mentally and physically prepared.
- Horseplay is never an option at work.