

# Better Health 4 YOU

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## WELLNESS-Germs in Public Places

It's A Dirty, Dirty World!

### Swimming with Bacteria

A water park crawling with 1,000 kids can have 22 pounds of poop floating around, says Michele Hlavsa, RN, chief of the CDC's Healthy Swimming Program. Little kids can carry as much as 10 grams of leftover feces on their rear ends, she says. They don't make a habit of washing off before jumping in, so all that poop just rinses off into the pool. It adds up, and chlorine doesn't kill everything. The CDC found that more than half of pools test positive for *E. coli*, which can cause bloody diarrhea. Your best line of defense? Try not to swallow any water.



### What's for Dinner?

Restaurant menus have 100 times more bacteria than a toilet seat, says Charles Gerba, PhD, a microbiologist with the University of Arizona, better known as Dr. Germ. They're

touched by tons, but only wiped down once a day, if that, and usually with a used rag. Instead of washing your hands before you sit down, scrub up after you order. And never lay your silverware on top of the menu.



### Like Germs with Your Garnish?

Like a squeeze of lemon with your water? Researchers looked at dozens of wedges from the rims of restaurant glasses. They found nearly 70% of the lemons had disease-causing microbes, including *E. coli* and feces, which could cause some nasty stomach issues. Next time, you may want to take your iced tea lemon-free.



Did you know elevators and ATMs are breeding grounds for bacteria? And that soap pumps are actually filthy? These tips will help you defend yourself.

### The Fountain of Youth

Think twice before sipping from the water fountain at your kid's school. It's dirtier than their toilet seats! That's because the bathrooms are cleaned regularly. Have you ever seen someone clean a drinking fountain? Just carry a water bottle with you instead.



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## Soap Scum

Ironically, public soap pumps are a breeding ground for bacteria, too. Think about it: From the stall to the sink, there's no telling what your hands can pick up. So scrub for at least 20 seconds or carry hand sanitizer. And before you reach for that door handle, think about how many people don't wash after using the restroom. The CDC says only 31% of men and 65% of women do.



## Carting Around Grime

Shopping cart handles can be downright gross. Turns out you're picking up more than just a loaf of bread. That handle can be swarming with up to 11 million microorganisms, including ones from raw meat. And just think about all the dirty diapers on that seat -- the same one you're putting your produce on. A lot of grocery stores have antibacterial wipes handy, so use them.



Mary Beth Cyliax RN, CCM

## Lift a Hand

Many people shudder at having to touch door handles, but they should be wary of elevator buttons, too. Again, do you ever see someone actually clean those? Push them with your elbow, take the stairs, or have sanitizer on hand.



## Check In and Check It Out

Hotel rooms come with a lot more than a mint on your pillow. The TV remote is the dirtiest object in there and could use a quick wipe before you channel surf. Other potential petri dishes: the bedside lamp switch, bedspread, hair dryer, telephone, and unwrapped drinking glasses.



## Frolic in Filth

Grubby little fingers grab slides and swings one after another. But playgrounds are rarely cleaned. The worse spot is the

sandbox, with 36 times more germs than a restaurant tray. And bacteria love nothing more than to hide out in warm, moist places. Come stocked with hand sanitizer and wipes.



## Dirty Money

ATM buttons, cash, and a revolving door of bank customers equals ick. In fact, the flu virus can live on a dollar bill for 17 days! But no one uses gloves or tissues to handle money. As for ATMs, companies hope to roll out touch screens with antimicrobial glass to combat cold and flu. For now though, your best defense is to press the buttons with a pen.



Call me anytime with questions