NEWS RELEASE

Germs Working Overtime - Especially at Women's Desks

2/14/2007

NEW STUDY COMPARES OFFICE SURFACES GERM BY GERM TO DETERMINE "GERMIEST" GENDER

OAKLAND, Calif., Feb. 14, 2007 – Forget chocolates this Valentine's Day. Buy her disinfectant. In the newest installment of "Germs in the Workplace," researchers led by the University of Arizona's Dr. Charles Gerba set out to compare just who piles up the most germs at work: men or women. The results? Men across the country may need to rethink their Valentine's gift. According to the researchers, the bacteria levels in women's offices were nearly three times higher than in men's offices.

"What we found is that women seemed to have more 'stuff' in their offices, from makeup bags to pictures of family and purses on their desks," said Dr. Gerba. "It added up to big numbers for women, even though their offices typically looked cleaner."

Who's Number One?

The study, which was funded by The Clorox Company, found the level of germs were fairly gender neutral when it came to desktops and phones - but computer mice and keyboards had three to four times more germs in women's offices than in men's. The gap widened even further when it came to desk drawers. For many women, they're often the place to stash a snack and scientists typically saw seven times more germs hiding out in women's desks than in men's.

The Money Round

It wasn't a clean sweep for men, though. According to Dr. Gerba, men's wallets were the single most germy item in any office - four times germier than women's purses - the item even the researchers were betting would come in at the top.

"Women frequently place their purses on the floor just about everywhere they go, so we've come to think of handbags as walking 'bag-teria,'" said Dr. Gerba. "But seems men may now have a good excuse to think twice before reaching for their wallets."

Study Highlights

For the testing, samples were collected in fall 2006 from private offices and cubicles in office buildings located in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oregon and New York City. A total of 113 surfaces were tested and analyzed at the University of Arizona laboratories.

- Germiest Workplace Surfaces Overall (Men and Women) –
  ranked from most germy to least germy
  Phone
  Keyboard
  Computer Mouse
  Desktop

Surface Description: Surface Stats

- Telephone
  - Most germy: Women
  - Least germy: Men
- Computer keyboard
  - Most germy: Women
  - Least germy: Men
- Computer mouse
  - Most germy: Women
  - Least germy: Men
- Desks

    - Most germy: Men
    - Least germy: Women

  - Exclamation key on keyboard
    - Most germy: Women
    - Least germy: Men

- Pens
    - Most germy: Women
    - Least germy: Men

Dr. Gerba's new study also found the presence of mold on various office surfaces, most of which is isolated in the bottom desk drawer, a popular stash for lunch items and snacks.

"As people spend more time at their desks, germs find plenty to snack on," said Dr. Gerba. "Desks are really bacteria cafeterias. They're breakfast buffets, lunch tables and snack bars, as we spend more and more hours at the office."

According to 2006 American Dietician Association survey, 57 percent of workers snack at their desks at least once a day. More than 75 percent of workers "only occasionally" clean their desks before eating; 20 percent never do, the survey found.

Although Dr. Gerba's new research measures bacteria level differences between the sexes, his previous "Germs in the Workplace" studies have looked at the presence of viruses within the workplace. In one study, Dr. Gerba and his researchers found that an infected person can leave a trail of viruses on every surface they touch - and some viruses can survive on surfaces for up to three days.

Dr. Gerba recommends frequent hand-washing and using disinfecting wipes daily on hard surfaces in your cubicle or office to kill germs. Clorox® Disinfecting Wipes kill 99.9 percent of the germs commonly found on office surfaces including those that can cause cold and flu.

About Clorox® Disinfecting Wipes

Clorox® Disinfecting Wipes make it easy to clean and disinfect in one easy step. Safe to use on most hard, non-porous surfaces, Clorox® Disinfecting Wipes are pre-moistened and ready to use – follow directions for disinfecting and just wipe, toss and be done. Clorox® Disinfecting Wipes kill 99.9 percent of the germs (Influenza A2 viruses) that cause flu symptoms, as well as the bacteria (Staphylococcus aureus and Salmonella choleraesuis) commonly

found in kitchens and bathrooms. To help decrease the spread of surface germs throughout a typical workday, use disinfecting wipes (enough for surfaces to remain visibly wet) daily on desks, computer mouse and keyboards, doorknobs, and telephones where germ levels are at their highest.

Contacts
Mary O'Connell, The Clorox Company, mary.o'connell@clorox.com, (510) 271.7166
Mary Seltzer, Ketchum, mary.seltzer@ketchum.com, (415) 984.2235

Clorox is a registered trademark of The Clorox Company.
Always read and follow precautions and directions before use.