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NEWS RELEASE

New Study Reveals Germiest Hot Spots at School

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PARENTS AND TEACHERS MAY WANT TO CONSIDER DISINFECTING HIGH TRAFFIC AREAS

OAKLAND, Calif., October 19, 2010 - In the cafeteria, the biggest threat may not be the kid that wants to eat your French fries or what is truly inside a hotdog. A recent study conducted by Dr. Charles Gerba and the University of Arizona in a K-12 school system found that the germiest place at school is the cafeteria table.

Researchers from the University of Arizona swabbed classrooms and common area surfaces at six schools in a K-12 school system to determine the relative numbers of total heterotrophic bacteria and coliform bacteria on frequently touched hard, non-porous surfaces.

In addition to the cafeteria table, the most contaminated sites include:

- the computer mouse, which harbored nearly twice as many bacteria than desktops,
- the bathroom paper towel handle
- water fountain
- bathroom sink faucets,
- library table and
- Computer keyboard.

Of the top eight most contaminated surfaces out of twelve sampled in the schools, six were in common areas

demonstrating the need for a joint prevention effort among teachers, students and other school personnel.

Each day, about 55 million students and 7 million staff attend the more than 130,000 public and private schools in the United States 1. - in fact, more than seven in 10 children (38 million) of school-aged children (aged 5-17 years) in the United States missed school in the past 12 months due to illness or injury 2.

"Some bacteria, are capable of causing infections and tend to collect on frequently touched surfaces - particularly in areas where there is a lot of hand-to-mouth contact like the cafeteria table," explains Dra. Aliza Lifshitz, internist at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and editor of VidaySalud.com. "To help your children minimize the spread of germs, encourage them to wash their hands frequently or use an alcohol-based hand rub, especially when sharing school supplies or taking turns using the computer."

Dra. Aliza has the following suggestions to help keep a cleaner classroom:

- Disinfect hot spots: Even if a classroom starts out clean, germs can - and do - build up all day. In fact, evidence of Influenza A virus was found on 13.6% of swabbed surfaces in the morning and jumped to about 50% by the afternoon.3 That's why teachers should implement a routine of frequently disinfecting germ hot spots in the classroom, like desktops and doorknobs, with disinfecting wipes, as directed. This can help supplement what the custodian is already doing.
- Arm them with the right tools: Parents should consider bringing teachers hand sanitizer or canisters of Clorox® Disinfecting Wipes to help make clean-up easier.
- Avoid Touching Surfaces in the Bathroom: Parents should teach kids to use paper towels to press the flush lever on the toilet and when turning water faucets on and off. If there are lids on the toilets, kids should learn to put them down before flushing.
- Walk the walk at home: children may be bringing more than just homework home to their families. That's why it is important for parents to adopt the same routines at home, such as wiping down frequently-touched surfaces like the remote control, countertops, phones and light switches.

1 CDC. Guidance for School Administrators to Help Reduce the Spread of Seasonal Influenza in K-12 Schools during the 2010-2011 School Year. http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/guidance.htm. 2010.
2 CDC: Summary Health Statistics for U.S. Children: National Health Interview Survey, 2008. Provide link
3 University of Arizona workplace study, Fall 2005, Dr. Charles P. Gerba Unpublished

For a copy of the full report please contact:

Natalie Judd
MASS

203-389-5223 or 203-605-5915

natalie.judd@masshispanic.com

Jennifer Walus

MASS

630-873-3080

Jennifer.walus@masshispanic.com