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“Dirty Jobs”

Most office environments harbor more bacteria than the workplace bathroom, and women’s workspaces tend to have more germs than their male co-workers, new research shows.

University of Arizona professor Charles Gerba conducted the \$40,000 study, commissioned by Clorox Co., in more than 100 offices on the UA campus and in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oregon and Washington, D.C.

He said that he thought men would have “germier” workspaces, but his results showed that women have three to four times the number of bacteria in, on and around their desks, phones, computers, keyboards, drawers and personal items as men do.

Generally, women’s desks tend to look cleaner. But unlike men, they usually have items such as food in desk drawers, hand lotions and cosmetics that can harbor

microorganisms and make prime germ-transfer agents.

“I was really surprised how much food there was in a woman’s desk,” Gerba told the Arizona Daily Star. “If there’s ever a famine, that’s the first place I’ll look for food.”

However, despite the abundant number of bacteria in women’s workspaces, Gerba found the worst overall office germ offender is men’s wallets. A wallet is generally in a man’s back pocket, where it’s dark, warm and a great place for bacteria to grow and live.

Another great place for bacteria to reside, he found, in men’s offices was the personal digital assistant.

“Men tend to play with their Palm Pilots more,” Gerba said. “I think they’re playing video games or something.”

The study supported the “myth” that the

average desktop is dirtier than the office toilet seat when it found 400 times more bacteria in the office.

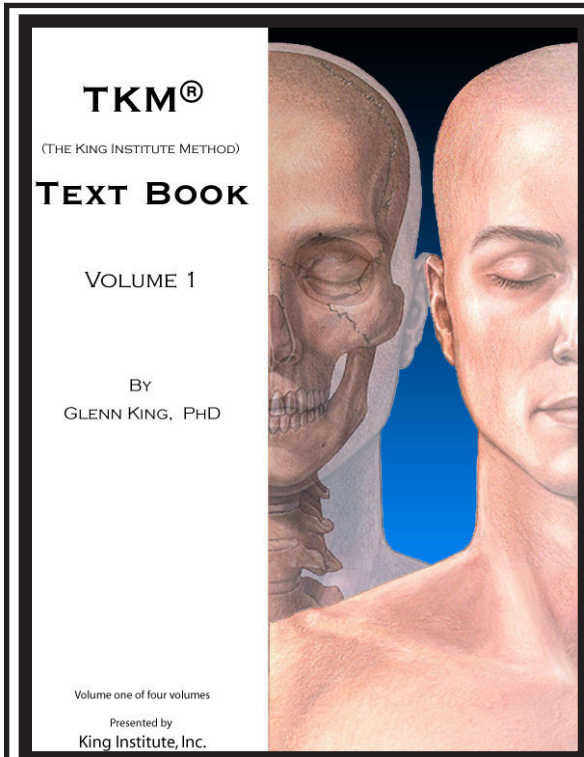
That’s because the bathrooms are generally cleaned everyday with industrial strength disinfectants.

And while people only spend a few minutes in the bathroom, they spend hours in their offices.

Cleaning services are usually only obligated to vacuum floors and clear trash receptacles in office spaces. Employees are then responsible to disinfect their workspaces.

Gerba suggested using hand sanitizers and using disinfectants on office surfaces to help. He had found 25 percent fewer bacteria on surfaces that were regularly disinfected.

“You don’t have to go crazy with it,” he said. Just focus on key areas such as desktops, phones and keyboards, and a once-a-day cleaning should be sufficient.



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“Good” cholesterol drug fails tests

The new strategy for preventing heart disease by raising good cholesterol has more setbacks after new studies showed that experimental drugs didn't work and also had safety problems.

This follows after Pfizer Inc. abandoned in December an \$800 million investment into torcetrapib because of the risk of heart attacks and deaths. Questions also arise as to whether this new approach to fighting heart disease is effective at all and whether its doomed all together.

The new studies, reported at the conference for the American College of Cardiology, found that the Pfizer drug seemed “uniquely risky,” but other drugs have problems as well.

Doctors have long focused on lowering LDL, or “bad” cholesterol with the use of statin drugs, which move fats from foods into the bloodstream. However, statin users of drugs such as Lipitor and Zocor suffer heart attacks anyway.

In hopes to avoid heart attacks, the new approach tried instead to boost HDL, or “good” cholesterol by transporting fats from the blood to the liver for disposal.

Kos Pharmaceuticals Inc. sells an ex-

tended-release niacin drug called Niaspan that can accomplish this. However, some people find the prickly hot flushing sensation that the drug causes intolerable. Pfizer, Merck & Co. and Swiss drug maker Roche Holding AG are also testing new drugs to boost HDL.

Several studies on torcetrapib showed that it raised HDL by 61 percent, but trends in death, hospitalization and heart attacks “are all going in the wrong direction,” said Dr. Steven Nissen, a Cleveland Clinic heart specialist and president of the American College of Cardiology.

An experimental diabetes drug by Eli Lilly and Co. also proved disappointing despite being 10,000 times more effective than the current cholesterol treatment by fibrates. It raised HDL but also raised the risk of kidney, heart and other serious problems.

Despite the problems, researchers are not going to abandon the approach. The concept of raising HDL was first considered after the first statin, Baycol sold by Bayer AG, was withdrawn from the market in 2001 after reports of severe and sometimes fatal muscle disorder. 📌

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