

## Hand Washing

Whether at work or home, good hand washing is one of the most effective ways to help stop the spread of infection. Hands should be washed:

### Before

- Eating or preparing food
- Giving medication or first aid

### After

- Using the toilet
- Handling any animals
- Contact with bodily fluids
- Coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose
- Contact with any potentially contaminated site e.g. office communal kitchen

### Before and after

- Handling raw food
- Tending to someone who is ill

### And whenever...

- Hands appear dirty



### Did you know?

A recent global survey found that nearly half (45%) of people worldwide believe that washing their hands regularly is the most effective way to help protect against catching a cold or flu, whilst a further 21% believe covering their mouth and nose when they sneeze provides the most protection<sup>1</sup>

To ensure your hands are clean, follow these eight steps:

1. Wet hands and apply soap. Rub palms together until soap is bubbly
2. Rub each palm over the back of the other hand
3. Rub between your fingers on each hand
4. Rub backs of fingers (interlocked)
5. Rub around each of your thumbs
6. Rub both palms with finger tips
7. Rinse your hands under clean running water
8. Dry your hands with a clean dry towel



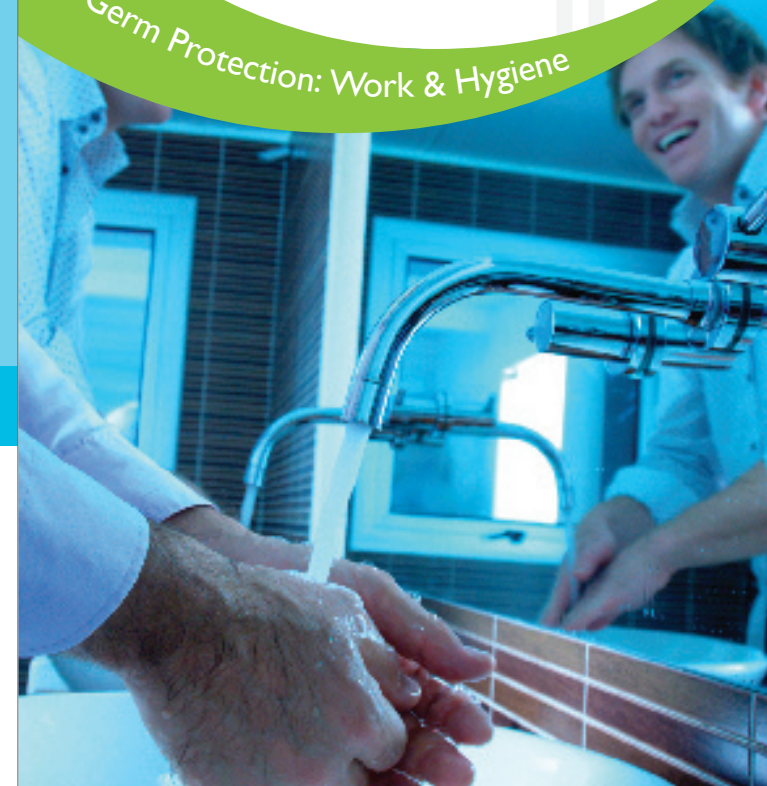
For further hygiene tips from the experts, visit [www.hygienecouncil.com](http://www.hygienecouncil.com)

<sup>1</sup> International Consumer Hygiene Attitudes and Behaviours Survey, Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS), March-May 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Gerber, Germs in the Workplace Study, University of Arizona, 2004. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/3505414.stm>. Last accessed: April 2009.

# Work and Hygiene

Germ Protection: Work & Hygiene



On average, working Britons spend at least nine hours each day at work, including travelling time. This equals 45 hours a week, or 195 hours a month. Put like that, it's clear that we spend more waking hours at work than we do in the home, so its worth spending some time thinking about the hygiene hazards that may be present.



## Hygiene Hazards and What you Can Do to Protect Yourself

It's not possible, or even desirable to make your environment completely germ free, however there are some basic precautions that you can take to help prevent yourself picking up an infection at work.

### Did you know?

Only 10% of respondents to a recent global survey believe that the regular cleaning and disinfection of commonly touched surfaces is the most effective way to help protect against catching a cold or flu<sup>1</sup>

## Travelling to Work

If you travel on public transport then your daily commute can expose you to many germs – mainly from other people and those remaining on commonly touched surfaces, such as hand rails. The number of people on public transport, coupled with the lack of fresh air in an enclosed space, means that people's germs can be passed around easily. Therefore it is important to cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing and then use a hand sanitizer. Germs can survive for days on a surface and could infect others, so it is important not to touch your eyes or mouth with your hands after coming into contact with commonly touched surfaces, as this could cause infection. Bin any tissues and wash your hands when you get to work.

## Office Germs

Research has found that people who work in an office are exposed to around 400 times the level of contamination found on a toilet seat when sitting at their desks. The average desk harbours a scary 10 million germs while your phone could be home to over 25 thousand germs per square inch, your keyboards over three thousand and your mouse over 1600, while the average toilet seat has 49 germs per square inch.<sup>2</sup>



## Occupations Requiring Higher Hygiene Standards

If you work in environments where levels of sanitation and hygiene are crucial, such as in hospitals, kitchens, care homes etc., it is crucial that effective hygiene standards are adhered to in order to ensure the risk of picking up an infection or passing germs from yourself to others is limited.

If working with food, always ensure you wash your hands thoroughly before and after touching food stuffs and ensure cross-contamination between different food stuffs e.g. meat and vegetables does not occur. Always ensure you follow food safety standards and guidelines such as those in the Hygiene Council's Hygiene Standards (available at <http://www.hygienecouncil.com>).

## What Can you Do?

There are a few key steps that you can follow to reduce the risk of picking up infections in your workplace.

- After preparing food, before you eat and after using the toilet, wash your hands with warm water and soap, drying carefully with clean dry towels
- Remember to cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and throw the tissue into a waste bin
- Try to avoid eating lunch at your desk, and if you have to, use a plate, and wipe the desk before and after eating. Try to avoid using your phone or key board whilst eating as this could cause contamination
- Carry antibacterial handwipes and hand sanitizing gel for use when you don't have access to soap and water such as when you are at your desk or on public transport
- You can use antibacterial surface wipes to kill bacteria on your desk, especially your keyboard, telephone and mouse