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Uptown  
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## Surprising Places Germs Lurk

The yuckiest room is not the bathroom

Bacteria and viruses are everywhere. The vast majority of germs don't make us sick—though some, of course, do. The average adult gets two to four colds or other respiratory infections annually...children may get up to 12 colds a year.

Surprisingly, the bathroom is not the main microbial hot spot. Where the germs really are ...

### CLEAN LAUNDRY

We know that dirty laundry is germ-laden. In fact, it has been associated with outbreaks of *salmonellosis* and *hepatitis A*, along with rotavirus, the most common cause of severe diarrhea. But seemingly clean laundry also can be loaded with bacteria and viruses.

**Fact:** The average pair of used underwear contains 0.1 gram of fecal matter, one of the main sources of infectious organisms. Up to 99% of the organisms are killed during an average wash cycle, but that still leaves about one million infectious agents.

**Self-defense:** Wash undergarments in hot water (140°F or hotter)—about 95% of American households use cooler water. Add bleach to the wash cycle for whites—three-quarter cup per washer load. It will kill an additional 90% of the organisms. A 45-minute dry cycle can kill the majority of any remaining pathogens.

**Also important:** Wash your hands immediately after transferring damp clothes to the dryer. Damp clothes are more likely to harbor germs than dry.

### RESTAURANT TABLETOPS

Every year in the US, there are about 76 million cases of food-borne gastroenteritis, with symptoms ranging from mild diarrhea to serious liver or kidney disease. Many of these cases originate in the home, but restaurants also

can be bacterial hot spots.

When restaurant table-tops were

swabbed, it was found that 70% were contaminated with *coliform* (fecal) bacteria, such as *E. coli*, organisms that are commonly found on meats as well as on vegetables and in water and soil.

In the same study, it was found that the bacterial load on tabletops was 45 times greater after the tables were wiped. *Reason:* The damp cloths used in restaurants are supposed to be sanitized between uses, but this usually is not done. The cloths tend to stay damp for long periods, which encourages bacterial growth. More than 89% of restaurant dishcloths were contaminated—and the bacterial level on bar dishcloths was even higher.

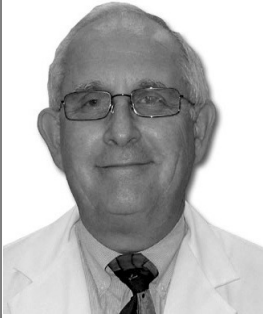
**Self-defense:** When you go to a restaurant, carry disposable disinfectant wipes and clean the table yourself. If you're at a bar, wipe the area in front of you with a disinfectant wipe—or spread a paper napkin to rest your elbows on. Also, clean hands with a disinfectant wipe after touching restaurant menus and those gadgets that vibrate when your table is ready—both are very rarely cleaned.

### KITCHEN SINKS

Tests were taken of 14 surfaces in each of 15 homes. *Result:* The kitchen sink, including the faucet handles, had the highest bacterial load. There's more bacteria in the average kitchen sink than in the average toilet. From a microbial perspective, the kitchen is the dirtiest room in the house. Many foods, particularly raw meats, transfer

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## Let's Talk

Dr. Jerry Shapiro

Happy Valentine's day to all and a restful President's weekend. In this month's column I would like to speak about two of our services in depth and the availability of H1N1 vaccine.

The first is our compounding service. Our Compounding Specialist Dr. Limor Shaye can prepare for you, our patients, specialty creams, ointments, suppositories and capsules. Many times a Doctor will want something prepared that is not commercially available. A prime example was during the current flu crisis we were making up suspensions of Tamiflu for kids. The manufacturer was unable to supply the suspension and kids could not swallow capsules. Many of our patients need special hormone creams and or suppositories made up as well. For most of these products if we have the raw ingredients we can usually make it up the

same day. If we have to order one or more of the ingredients, it will generally take a few days the first time. In most cases your insurance will pay for these products as well.

Our second new service is a brown bag review of your medicine cabinet. Dr Christine Gonzalez is the lead person for this service which will insure several things. First and foremost, that nothing in your cabinet is outdated. Also that there is no interaction between the various items. Interaction can happen when you have more than one Doctor and one does not know what the other one is prescribing. Also you may have purchased an over the counter item that interacts with one of your prescription drugs and we or your Doctor are not aware of this situation.

I also wanted to let you all know that our supply of H1N1 vaccine has arrived and we will be giving shots from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM five days a week. There are no lines. Also if you have ten or more people we will gladly come to your office to give the shots. Please note that we only have the dead virus vaccine (no live virus). If you have any questions do not hesitate to call us and speak with Rizza about scheduling.

In closing I wanted to let you know that thanks to many of you we collected in our water jug \$258.00 for our community for change project. I will be adding 10% and will be donating it to survivors of the Station Fire.

### WHEN INSULTS HAD CLASS

- \* I have never killed a man, but I have read many obituaries with great pleasure. -- Clarence Darrow
- \* I've had a perfectly wonderful evening. But this wasn't it.-- Groucho Marx
- \* I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it. -- Mark Twain
- \* He has no enemies, but is intensely disliked by his friends.-- Oscar Wilde
- \* I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend...If you have one. -- George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill...followed by Churchill's response: Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second, if there is one.
- \* I feel so miserable without you; it's almost like having you here.-- Stephen Bishop
- \* I've just learned about his illness. Let's hope it's nothing trivial.-- Irvin S. Cobb
- \* He is not only dull himself; he is the cause of dullness in others.-- Samuel Johnson
- \* He had delusions of adequacy.-- Walter Kerr
- \* His mother should have thrown him away and kept the stork.-- Mae West
- \* Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go. -- Oscar Wilde

### Very Useful Web Sites

**Flu update:** Self-defense strategies... vaccine recommendations...school/business planning...medications.

[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)

**Surgery lookup:** Online videos of orthopedic, sinus and dozens of other operations.

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/surgeryvideos.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/surgeryvideos.html)

**Online learning:** Free flash cards and other tools for study in a variety of subjects.

[www.studystack.com](http://www.studystack.com)

**Found money:** See whether you have any old bank accounts, uncashed checks or other unclaimed assets.

[www.naupa.org](http://www.naupa.org)

**Shop and give:** Money is donated to a charitable organization whenever you buy at a participating online store.

[www.goodsearch.com/goodshop.aspx](http://www.goodsearch.com/goodshop.aspx)

**A new you:** Upload a photo to see what you would look like if you lost or gained weight.

[www.weightmirror.com/weightmirror](http://www.weightmirror.com/weightmirror)





## Hints from JoAnn

**Quick Whipping** -- A teaspoonful of cold water added to the white of an egg causes it to whip more quickly while increasing the quantity.

**Moldy Fruit** -- What should you do with fruit with mold? Throw it away rather than simply cutting off the mold since mold on fruit goes much deeper than what appears on the fruit.

**Broccoli Stalks** -- Don't discard the tough ends of broccoli stalks. Use them for making soups.

**Measuring Honey** -- Measuring honey with a spoon is easy but getting it all off the spoon is another matter--so first rub the spoon with margarine.

**Dropping Cookie Dough** -- To get cookie dough to drop without sticking dip the spoon in milk first.

**Leftover Pie Dough** -- Extra pie dough? Cover it with some parmesan and gruyere cheese and you'll bake a delicious appetizer--at the very same meal with your pie as dessert.

**Easy Shelling** -- Pecans are easy to shell if they are first soaked in boiling water for 10 minutes or so. Or microwave 2 cups of pecans or Brazil nuts in 1 cup of water for 5 to 6 minutes on HIGH.

**Storing Cake** -- If you store half an apple in the container in which you are storing a cake, the cake will retain its freshness.

**Cheesy Apple Pie** -- Don't just serve cheese with apple pie, bake it right in. Spread grated sharp Cheddar on the bottom of the crust before adding the apple filling.

**Sticking Cake Layers** -- Cake layers sticking to the bottom of the pans? Put them back in a warm oven for a short time. The layers will then come out without a problem.

## How to Feel and Look Younger

Following are five strategies that will really help you to feel and look younger than you actually are...



**1. Practice stretching each morning.** Regular stretching helps you feel more flexible and, as a result, you will feel and look younger. By stretching, you relax your muscles, and movements become more graceful and youthful.

**2. Stand up straight.** By maintaining good posture, you'll look 10 pounds thinner. Practice in front of the mirror, and you'll notice that your stomach looks flatter, your torso appears longer and thinner—and you don't have that old, tired, hunched look.

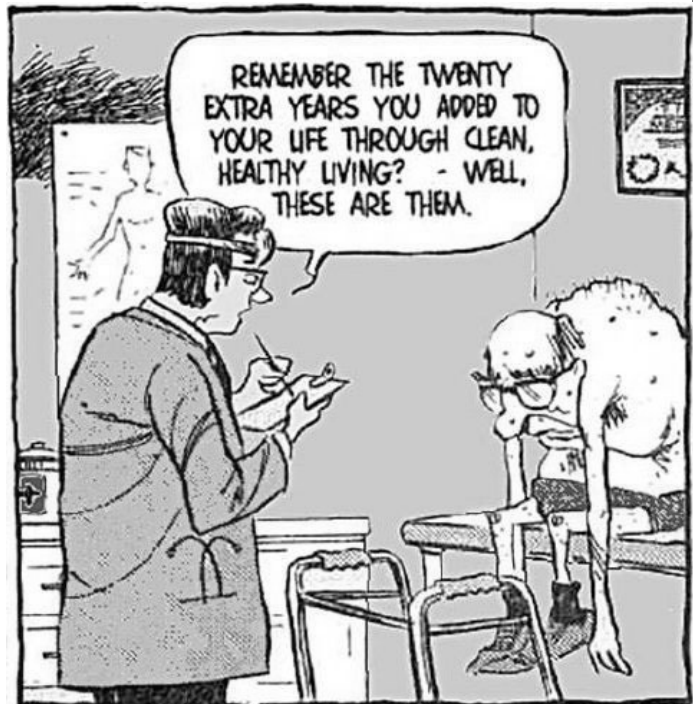
**3. Exercise at least 15 minutes a day.** Physical activity alleviates depression and improves your mood. It also sends more blood to the skin, giving your complexion a healthy, rosy and youthful glow.

**4. Eat more fruits and vegetables.** A vegetarian or even a semi-vegetarian diet that includes lots of fruits, vegetables and grains will help you maintain a stable energy level. By eating sensibly, you can increase your energy level and feel younger.

**5. Reduce stress.** If left unchecked, stress puts unnecessary wear and tear on your body's internal organs, which causes you to look tired and years older.

## Money Saver

Lease trading can help you get out of a car lease that you can no longer afford...or obtain one if you need a car for a short term and can find a lease that is almost over. Web sites LeaseTrader.com and Swapalease.com have both been arranging lease exchanges for 10 or more years. Fees to transfer a lease generally range from \$50 to \$500, and current lease holders must get permission from the leasing company to give up the lease.



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coliforms and other disease-causing organisms to sinks, counters and cutting boards. Some of these organisms can survive for up to 24 hours, providing ample opportunities to cause infection.

**Self-defense:** After preparing raw meats, clean the kitchen sink with a bleach solution (one-quarter cup of bleach per gallon of water) or a commercial cleaning solution with bleach. Use the same solution to sanitize countertops, refrigerator handles and other surfaces. *Also helpful:* Pour one-quarter cup of bleach into the garbage disposal at least once a month. Because a cutting board often is used for meats, merely wiping the board isn't enough. Use a generous amount of a bleach or cleaning solution, let it sit for five to 10 minutes, then rinse off. Also, sanitize sponges and dishcloths at least once a week. You can run them through the clothes washer and dryer. Or soak them in a bleach solution for about an hour. You also can sanitize sponges and dishcloths in the micro-wave—soak them with water, and microwave for 30 seconds.

#### TV REMOTE CONTROLS

Certain household gadgets are rarely cleaned, including TV remote controls. If someone in your house has the flu, more than 50% of household gadgets, including remote controls and telephones, can harbor the virus.

**Self-defense:** Wipe remote controls, telephones, your keyboard, mouse and other often-used devices with an alcohol sanitizer every two to three days—more often if someone who is using these devices is infected.

#### LIQUID HAND SOAPS

The refillable soap containers in public restrooms often are contaminated with fecal bacteria. *Reason:* The antimicrobial preservatives used in liquid soaps can break down, allowing harmful organisms to proliferate. A single "pull" can dispense millions of bacteria.

**Self-defense:** Use only the soap from dispensers that contain bagged soap. This soap doesn't get contaminated. To play it safe, wipe your hands with a disposable wipe or alcohol gel. If you use refillable soap dispensers at home, wash them carefully with hot water before refilling.

#### GROCERY CARTS

About two-thirds of grocery store shopping-cart handles are contaminated with *coliform* bacteria. Many carts had a higher concentration of bacteria than public restrooms.

**Self-defense:** Some supermarkets offer sanitary wipes for cart handles or have installed systems to disinfect entire carts. Look for these supermarkets, or bring your own wipes. Place fresh produce (including melons), meat and poultry in plastic bags.

## Very Personal...

**Two questions to ask your spouse** that can improve your relationship: "What were the best and worst things that happened to you this week?"..."What made the best thing so good and the worst so bad for you?"

Asking these questions of your partner every week—and giving him/her time to answer them—will bring you closer by letting him speak about successes and problems at length. You can follow up with other questions.

*Examples:* "Then what happened?" "What are you planning to do now about that?" It would be nice for your partner to ask you the same questions, but it is better to wait for him/her to do so naturally and spontaneously.

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