We all know the importance of washing our hands especially after using the restroom or handling food in the kitchen, but what about other situations and places? Here are three examples of where bacteria may be lurking in places that you might not expect them:

**Going to the gym? So are the germs**

According to an article published at businessinsider.com, fitness equipment review website Fitrated, gathered bacteria samples from 27 different pieces of equipment and then had them tested by EmLab P&K. The lab tested the samples to determine bacteria levels based on colony-forming units (CFU). The treadmill and exercise bike came out worst overall in terms of the CFU count. On treadmills, the study found an average of 74 times more bacteria than a tap in a public toilet, while the average exercise bike harboured 39 times more bacteria than a cafeteria tray.

To avoid this bacteria, consider disinfecting machines both before and after use, avoid walking around barefoot or touching your face, always wash your hands, and always change out of your gym clothes straight after a workout.

**Smartphones yes, clean phones no**

We have only one word for this: Ewwwwww! Fecal matter can be found on 1 out of every 6 smartphones, according to a 2011 study done by researchers at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. According to the study, cell phones have become veritable reservoirs of pathogens as they touch faces, ears, lips and hands of different users of different health conditions. Other studies have found serious pathogens on smartphones such as Streptococcus, MRSA – which is a type of bacteria that is resistant to several antibiotics – and even E. coli.

Two safe ways to clean your phone include using a microfiber cloth or isopropyl rubbing alcohol. Check with your phone manufacturer to confirm what is safe to use on your phone to keep it germ free.

**Makeup bags**

Makeup bags and cases are the perfect breeding ground for a host of bacteria. A study conducted by London Metropolitan University discovered as many as six types of bacteria breeding on out-of-date cosmetics and beauty brushes.

On a regular basis, remove all products from your bag or case and give it a good cleaning. The best and quickest way to do this is with antibacterial wipes. Simply wipe the inside of the bag or case until any makeup residue is gone. Discard products that are expired.
The secret to not getting sick on vacation

Getting sick on vacation is never fun. It can waste your time, money and precious vacation days. If you’re planning a trip abroad, there are many ways to keep you and your family healthy.

Here are some tips from the Public Health Agency of Canada to consider:

Visit a healthcare professional.
At least six weeks before you leave, check in with your doctor or visit a travel health clinic. Review your family’s immunization history to ensure each traveller has received all recommended vaccines and boosters. Ask about options for additional vaccinations, preventative medication and other precautions to reduce the risk of travel-related illnesses.

Always take precautions with food and water.
Eat foods that are well cooked and served hot, especially meat and seafood. Drink water only if it has been boiled, disinfected or is in a commercially sealed bottle.

Take action to avoid insect bites.
Cover up by wearing light-coloured clothing, loose pants and long-sleeved shirts made of tightly woven materials. Use insect repellent on exposed skin day or night. Sleep in areas that are completely enclosed or well screened and use bed nets for young children in playpens and strollers.

Remember those with special health needs.
Children, seniors and pregnant women all have unique travel health needs since they are more likely to have compromised or developing immune systems. You may need to take extra precautions to protect their health.

Find travel health advice related to your destination and search by country name at travel.gc.ca.

Read all labels to choose healthy foods
You are off to the grocery store full of good intentions to eat healthier. Little do you know that there are obstacles in your way like fancy packages with misleading comments like “all-natural” or “farm-fresh”, making food that you think is a healthy option exactly the opposite. Here are a few examples:

Microwave Popcorn: Typically, freshly made popcorn can be a great fibre-rich snack, but the microwaveable versions usually have high levels of sodium and the chemical diacetyl, making it a food that shouldn’t be eaten often according to nutrition consultants. Remember to read all the labels on the packaging.

Flavoured Yogurt: Many flavoured yogurt options can have more sugar than a piece of cake. Similarly, other flavoured health foods like milk, oatmeal, coconut water and smoothies are also laden with sugar. Remember to turn the container over and see just how much sugar was added and what form of sweetener was used.

Turkey Bacon: Yes, it might be a slightly better option than the pork variety. But turkey bacon is still bacon — meaning, it has high amounts of sodium and saturated fats which puts you at risk for obesity and heart disease.

Packaged Salads: If done right, salad can be a perfectly healthy and filling meal. But ready-to-eat salads often contain high levels of sodium and fat along with a whole bunch of preservatives to keep it from getting spoiled. This makes homemade salads your best bet, just remember to go easy on the salad dressing!

Multigrain Bread: Just because it’s multigrain doesn’t mean it’s a healthier option. It just means that the bread is made with more than one kind of grain. The key is to look for bread that’s made from whole grains instead of refined ones. This is because finely milled grains lack gut-healthy fibre and lose most of the essential nutrients (like iron, magnesium and B vitamins) during the milling process.
Helping someone through a panic attack

Anxiety and panic are two different entities that no one wants to experience, but can rarely escape from. For many, mild anxiety and panic can be managed, but for some, these feelings can be debilitating, even life-threatening.

Anyone who’s ever had a panic attack can tell you what a rollercoaster-of-a-ride it can be. It comes on suddenly, gripping its victims in extreme fear and heart-thumping, breath-taking physical distress. Panic attacks usually don’t last longer than 30 minutes.

Anxiety is another story. Anxiety symptoms vary in intensity from mild to severe. According to health.com, many professionals caution using the term “anxiety attack” because anxiety symptoms are usually neither swift nor short-lived. Anxiety tends to involve low-grade symptoms that persist over a longer period of time.

Seeing a friend or a loved one experience a panic attack can be a frightening experience. It can also be challenging to feel powerless to help that person and to watch them suffer.

While you’re unlikely to be able to stop your loved one’s panic attack in its tracks, there are things you can do and say to help them through the experience. Try these suggestions from psycom.net:

**It is important to stay calm, patient, and understanding.** Help your friend wait out the panic attack by encouraging them to take deep breaths in for four seconds and out for four seconds. Stay with them and assure them that this attack is only temporary and they will get through it. You can also remind them that they can leave the environment they are in if they would feel more comfortable elsewhere and try to engage them in light-hearted conversation.

Once the panic attack is over and the person has returned to a calm state, encourage them to seek help from a mental health professional at their earliest convenience, if they haven’t already. You can help them further by assisting with the search for a licensed professional, researching coping techniques online, and looking for self-help books that might be useful.

If you think you have been experiencing panic attacks or are constantly dogged by worries which can be a sign of an anxiety disorder, talk with your healthcare professional.

Business
texting
etiquette

With the amount of apps out there encouraging communication by text, it’s small wonder that proper etiquette when business texting has become a popular enquiry. It also raises the question as to who or what decides the rules of proper texting etiquette. Is there a Miss Manners for the smartphone era? Sure enough, there is.

The following suggestions are from the Protocol School of Texas:

**Text only when there is an established business relationship.**

Once you have developed a comfortable relationship in person or by email, ask what their preference of communication is and let it be your guide. A text should never be your first contact with a business associate.

**Pay attention to timing.** Limit texting to work hours. You wouldn’t call a client with a great idea right before you climbed into bed for the evening, so don’t text them at that hour either. Sending a text after hours signals urgency. Wait until the next business day to relay your message.

**Know when to make a call.** Anything complex that might require further explanation should be handled with an email or a phone call. However, a short text could be a good start to inquire as to the best time to talk.

**Text clear, specific information.** A text message doesn’t allow for subtleties. Use texts for information that has little room for misinterpretation. Avoid attempts at humour or witty remarks - without a lot of context, your message could get lost in translation.

**Reply promptly.** Texting conveys a sense of immediacy. When you receive a message from a client or your boss, respond in a timely manner. On the other hand, when a text is emotional, give yourself some time to think your response through. The speed of texting is why we love it, but don’t let it work against you.

**Remain professional.** Every piece of communication is a reflection of your professionalism. Avoid using emoji’s; reserve them for your personal correspondence. Avoid abbreviations that are confusing at worst, silly at best. As with every form of communication, spelling and punctuation count.
Stressful jobs come in a variety of packages. For some, the stress comes from too much to do with many deadlines looming, constant emails and nonstop notifications from your phone.

For others, it’s boredom. That’s right. The job is so boring, the very idea of having to get up and go to work to face another day of nothing causes sleepless nights and stressful days.

The first example can lead to burnout, something that is talked about often. The second example gets less attention but is known as “bore-out”.

Everyone feels bored at work sometimes. But if you are chronically bored or under-stimulated, it can have a big impact on your health and wellbeing.

With bore-out you start to feel stuck until your personal development comes to a halt. For example, there is nothing new to learn, or you are given tasks that you can complete in one morning but were given two weeks to do it, or you feel like you are being under-utilized because your boss needed someone to fill a position to keep her budget intact, but there simply isn’t enough stimulating work to get through the day.

You don’t have to leave your current job to fix this problem. You really can turn bore-out around if you’re willing to work at it, take the right steps, and reach out to others in your company and network.

The first thing to do is to talk about it, don’t try to hide. Even if it feels very shameful to admit that you’re bored, talk about it with your employer and ask for new challenges.

Here are a few more tips:
1. Ask yourself what exactly bores you about your current situation and what kinds of new responsibilities would seem appealing.
2. Check into job shadowing. You may be able to shadow someone from an entirely different part of the company and learn something utterly unrelated to your current job.
3. Work on increasing your visibility within the company and in building your personal brand.
4. Learn to separate work life from private life. Playing sports, going to the theatre, going to the movies or meeting friends are some of the most positive options. Reading is also a very good pastime, as it allows us to switch off from reality. We are human beings, and we need enjoyment. Try to be healthy and don’t resort to alternatives such as alcohol or drugs.

Tips to hit the ground running

Exercise has the ability to heal the mind and restore the soul. Research shows that running and walking can be as effective as taking medication for mild to moderate depression and anxiety. It can also have a positive impact on our diet and sleep, which is often impacted when we’re feeling stressed.

Adding something else to our already jam-packed schedules can seem daunting, but with all of the positive benefits exercise can have on our overall health, it’s worth taking the time to do something for yourself.

Make sure you’re taking the necessary steps to nourish your body and help protect yourself from injury prior to and following a run. Here are a few tips to help:

Eat nutrient-rich foods:
When planning out your day and run, ensure that the foods you are choosing are nutrient-rich – such as whole-grains, lean proteins and fruits and vegetables – as this will help to fuel you through your training and daily activities. Proper nutrition is also important for muscle recovery and avoiding injuries, as well as preventing early fatigue when running. And stay hydrated.

Set a goal for yourself:
Sign up for a run in your local community. There is nothing better than being cheered on for doing your best. While some runners can be competitive, most people participating have a wide range of abilities and some even walk from start to finish.

Recover to prevent injury:
Be sure to eat a snack with protein and carbohydrates to help repair, build and maintain muscles and refuel glycogen stores within 30 to 60 minutes of finishing your training.
Encourage a healthier alternative for workplace events

It just doesn’t seem fair, does it? You walk into the breakroom and there they are. The daily offering of donuts or other sweet pastries because someone is celebrating an anniversary of some sort. You open the fridge to grab your Tupperware container of carrots and celery, and there’s the rest of Mike’s birthday cake staring you in the face.

But there is hope on the horizon. Thanks to today’s growing food awareness, snacking at work is changing. Many companies, regardless of size, are taking notice of statistics showing that providing free snacks is key to a happier workforce and choosing healthier snacks can improve health, happiness and productivity.

But that doesn’t stop the celebratory sugary food from coming in. Try bringing in these treats the next time there is a special event in the office:

**Trail Mix**
Trail mix combines foods rich in fibre, fats, and protein in one delicious snacking experience. This means you’ll feel full longer, and you’ll be eating lower net carbs. Make sure your trail mix gets its sweetness from natural sources, not from candy or chocolate pieces.

**Dark Chocolate**
Dark chocolate is a great source of antioxidants and has been linked to lower cholesterol. The darker the chocolate, the better, because these varieties tend to be made with less added sugar and contain more antioxidant-rich cocoa.

**Nuts**
Nuts make a great snack, mostly because they contain healthy fats (including omega-3 fatty acids), protein, and fibre. Be aware that some co-workers may have an allergy to nuts, so don’t hide them in another snack, and choose the unsalted kind as a healthier option.

**Fruit**
Fruit is a great office snack because it’s compact and portable, and there are many options to choose from besides apples and bananas. A cool idea is to use fresh fruit to create a unique “cake”. Start with slicing up a watermelon, add some orange slices, grapes, or strawberries. Let your imagination run wild!

---

**Ways to help stop the sniffles this allergy season**

(NE) While the return of warmer weather is definitely a welcome change, the return of itchy eyes and a constantly dripping nose may not be.

It’s estimated that 25% of Canadians are affected by seasonal allergies, and depending on what you are allergic to, allergy season may not just affect you in the spring but could also linger right up until the first frost in the fall.

This spring, try to avoid the discomfort by getting to the bottom of what is causing your allergies before they start. Here are five tips to help you get ahead of your symptoms:

**Check the pollen forecast:**
Be on top of this as it can change daily and really affect your symptoms. If you’re planning on exercising, go to the gym or exercise inside on warm, windy days.

**When you are outside, protect yourself:**
Wear sunglasses or a hat to help keep pollen off your body and out of your eyes.

**Cover up when being active outside:**
If you are doing outdoor activities like cutting the lawn or gardening, consider wearing a mask or scarf to cover your nose and mouth.

**Protect yourself from pollen:**
We carry a lot of pollen into the home with us. Wash your bedding more frequently during spring, summer and fall; keep your windows closed and remember your pets can track pollen into the house, too.

**Find the right product:**
Talk with your health care professional to discuss the right treatment options, especially if you have extreme difficulty coping. You do not need to be suffering so much during this time of year.
Prevention Works!

We all have the power to prevent cancer

Results from a recent study funded by the Canadian Cancer Society offers no new solutions when it comes to cancer prevention, but the numbers of how many cases of cancer could indeed be prevented shows us that we all need to act.

The study points out that as many as 4 in 10 cancer cases could be prevented by not smoking, being physically active, maintaining a healthy weight, and having a nutritious diet and practising sun safety.

For example, if current trends continue, the number of new cancer cases due to smoking would increase to 46,900 in 2042 from 32,700 in 2015. Physical inactivity would increase the number of cases to 16,500, up from 11,600.

At least one, if not all of these elements are within our control. We can make the decision to get more exercise by using another way to get to work other than driving once or twice a week. We can talk to our health care professionals about the best way to quit smoking, and we can stay out of the sun at peak hours of the day. We can choose water rather than drinks with high sugar content.

Small changes can lead to big results. When you consider the alternative, it’s worth a try.

For more on the study visit prevent.cancer.ca

Energy Zone

Celery juice – what’s the deal?

If you’re not familiar with the whole celery juice trend, you make it by blending and straining whole stalks of celery into juice, according to Good Housekeeping. The celery juice movement calls for you to drink it every morning on an empty stomach.

While celery juice is likely a better drink of choice in the morning than that large macchiato with extra caramel and a shot of vanilla, there’s currently no medical evidence to back the claims that it will cure a specific medical ailment.

Studies have shown that eating actual celery stalks does have a lot of health benefits because it contains fibre. According to the MayoClinic, dietary fibre — found mainly in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes — can provide health benefits such as helping to maintain a healthy weight and lowering your risk of diabetes, heart disease and some types of cancer. Juicing celery will still give you the veggie’s vitamins C and K, as well as essential minerals like potassium and folate.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, but straining it removes all the fibre leaving its health benefits up for debate.

Bottom line; celery juice is a healthy drink alternative and a step in the right direction toward a healthier diet. PS: There’s no medical evidence to support drinking celery juice on an empty stomach has any benefit. So if you want to start drinking celery juice, drink it whenever you want.

If you don’t smoke, don’t vape

If you don’t smoke, don’t vape

(NC) Huge plumes of vapour drifting around from people walking with “vapes” seems to be a common thing to see these days. What exactly are people doing when they “vape”? Here are a few facts:

It isn’t risk-free.

Vaping can increase your exposure to chemicals that could harm your health. Although vaping products have less chemicals in them and at much lower levels than cigarettes, when a vaping liquid is heated, new chemicals are created, such as formaldehyde.

It is still addictive.

Many vaping products contain nicotine, a highly addictive substance. Vaping products that do contain nicotine definitely deliver nicotine to your brain, causing you to crave it more and more. Youth are particularly vulnerable to the effects of nicotine because their brains are still developing.

The jury’s still out on its long-term effects. Because the technology is so new, only some of the immediate health effects are known. Full health effects won’t be known for years.

Is it less harmful than smoking? Point out that smokers who switch completely to vaping are reducing their exposure to toxic chemicals that come from smoke.

However, vape users are still taking in nicotine. Vaping works by heating up a liquid that usually contains nicotine, and pumping the vapour out for you to breathe. Because you aren’t lighting anything on fire, vaping doesn’t have the same risks as breathing in tobacco smoke.

There’s also the factor that for second-hand exposure, vaping devices only put out emissions when they’re activated for a puff, whereas cigarettes constantly burn and put out sidestream smoke.

While quitting smoking can be difficult, it is possible, and help is available. Because vaping delivers nicotine in a less harmful way than smoking, smokers may want to consider replacing their cigarettes with vaping as a step toward their quitting goal.

A word of caution – vaping is not for youth and non-smokers. Because vaping still exposes users to harmful chemicals, it’s best to prevent its uptake and stay smoke- and vape-free. In the end, if you don’t smoke; don’t vape.

Find out the facts about vaping online at Canada.ca/vaping.