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### GERMIEST PLACES:

It is possible for a person to touch about 30 things in one minute from daily and normal activities.

This heightens the chance of contracting and spreading germs to and from all these objects if in a public setting. But there are ways to avoid being infected by knowing the more obscure places germs hide other than door knobs, light switches, and bathroom surfaces. Here are 3 out of 7 listed by ABC News:

#### Restaurant menus

Studies from the Journal of Medical Virology reports germs like the cold and flu viruses can survive for up to 18 hours on a hard surface. When dining in a public place, be conscious to not let the menu touch your flatware and wash your hands after you return it.

#### Lemon wedges

The Journal of Environmental Health discovered 70 percent of restaurants had contaminated bar fruit with microorganisms like E. coli, fecal bacteria, and other disease causing microbes. By opting out of the garnish for your beverage is a good way to prevent ingestion.

#### Condiment dispenser

Many people do not wash their hands before eating and they can spread their germs to bottles at the condiment stand. When grabbing for the ketchup, a paper napkin is not sufficient due to the abilities for microorganisms being able to pass through.

#### Sources:

ABCNews February 20, 2011

I've said it before and I'll say it again, unless you are living in a sterile bubble you are going to encounter other people's germs when you venture out into public. And there are plenty of germs lurking inside your own house as well!

The featured article points out some of the most contaminated environments you may find yourself in, and one study from the same researcher mentioned in the article reports that you have an 86 percent chance of transferring germs to your hands when you touch any public surface, and an 82 percent of transferring those germs to your home or personal belongings hours later.

So the chances are high that if you touch things in public (or in your own home), germs are going to end up on your hands and on most of your personal belongings as well, even hours later.

Below I discuss how to best protect yourself from contaminated areas while in public, but my best recommendation is to keep your immune system in tip top shape to fight off any rogue bacteria, viruses and fungi that you may come into contact with no matter where you find yourself.

#### Your Healthy Skin is a Powerful Bacteria Fighter

It's important to remember that your skin is one the best bacteria defense systems found in nature. Even if you touch a filthy bathroom door handle, or anything inside of an airplane's lavatory (two of the most contaminated surfaces mentioned in the above article), your skin will keep you safe from

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catching any diseases found on these surfaces. The bacteria and viruses you may get onto your hands must migrate to your nose, mouth or eyes before they actually present a health hazard.

Unless your skin is cracked or you have open sores.

And what is a main cause of cracked skin?

Overwashing your hands!

So ironically, the more you wash your hands and apply anti-bacterial gels, the more you may be opening yourself up to catching a bacterial infection through your skin! So while you'll want to wash your hands after touching a restaurant's menu (before your food arrives), you definitely don't want to go overboard and wash your hands again and again and wind up with cracked skin.

### Proper Hand Washing Technique

Also please keep in mind that plain soap and water have been shown to be more effective than anti-bacterial soap! Furthermore, the active ingredient in most antibacterial products is triclosan, an antibacterial agent that kills bacteria and inhibits bacterial growth. But not only does triclosan kill bacteria, it also has been shown to kill human skin cells.

My advice is to stick to simply use plain soap and water.

Also you want to make sure you're actually removing the germs when you wash your hands, as many bacteria hide in the area around your nails, and very few people ever clean this area properly. So here is my hand washing guideline:

- Use a mild non-antibacterial soap
- Work up a good lather, all the way up to your wrists, for at least 10 or 15 seconds
- Make sure you cover all surfaces, including the backs of your hands, wrists, between your fingers, and around and below your fingernails
- Rinse thoroughly under the warm running water

When using a public restroom, you should also use a paper towel to touch the door handle as you exit the bathroom. Because when you think about it, touching that door handle again really defeats the purpose of washing in your hands in the first place. People may give you funny looks, but perhaps they'll think differently about you when they come down with the flu after using a public restroom!

Menus, Condiment Dispensers, Shopping Card Handles, Lemon Wedges

Eating out and shopping for your food are apparently two of the most hazardous activities when it comes to encountering germy surfaces. It stands to reason that any time many people are touching something that isn't cleaned regularly (if at all), you will find your hands picking up a batch of strange germs.

Have you really ever seen someone clean a salt or pepper shaker?

Or how about a restaurant menu? Or a shopping cart handle? Yet most people are touching these things all day long and leaving rogue bacteria behind for up to 18 hours, and in the case of noroviruses, they can survive on public surfaces for weeks at a time!

While the idea of strange fecal bacteria coating your restaurant lemon wedge is disgusting, and certainly not hygienic, the above article from ABC News points out that your own kitchen sink may be harboring some hazardous bacteria as well. Studies have actually shown that there could be up to 200 times more fecal bacteria on your kitchen cutting board than on your toilet seat. And

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that sponge that you use to wash your dishes? It's commonly loaded with disease-causing bacteria (for a quick tip on how to really clean your sponges, [click here](#)), as are computer keyboards, desks, and phone receivers.

Some other bacterial trouble spots you should be wary of include daycare centers, children's playgrounds, gymnasiums, movie theaters and airports.

And did I mention that one of the "riskiest" ways to pick up an infection is by simply shaking hands with someone?

It's true.

#### For the Best Protection, Keep Your Immune System Healthy

Bacteria, fungi and viruses are literally everywhere and you've got them on your hands and body right now. In fact, if you're at a computer reading this, your computer mouse, keyboard and desk are all most likely literally teeming with germs. The point is, you can't run from them and you don't even need to when your immune system is functioning healthy.

A strong healthy immune system is your best defense against any pathogenic organisms you come across, and will serve you well if you nourish it with the proper tools.

For more information you can read my article on how to keep your immune system in top working order. Briefly, you can support your immune system by:

Getting a good night's sleep. Minimizing stress in your life.

Exercising regularly and effectively. Optimize your vitamin D levels.

Avoiding sugar and grains, and instead eating plenty of raw foods.

Taking a high-quality probiotic (good bacteria) and eating plenty of fermented foods like kefir and natto, which are natural sources of probiotics.