

Scrub Smarter | Bathroom Hygiene Tips (Print)

Bathrooms are filled with germ-breeding objects, and your toilet isn't the sole culprit.

Showers, toothbrushes, soap dispensers and any surface can be added to the germy list, according to Kaylin Heinz, an infection preventionist RN with OSF HealthCare. Heinz offers some cleaning tips for the different areas of your bathroom.

Shower Cleaning tips

"When you're cleaning, go from top to bottom," Heinz says. "If you start cleaning your tub and then you clean your shower walls, you're going to have to re-clean the tub. When you're getting out of the shower, think about the moisture that's there. That's where the bacteria and fungus are going to grow, so you're going to want to get rid of that moisture if you can."

The moisture buildup isn't limited to linens, Heinz says. She recommends wiping down any moisture seen in the shower before getting out. Use a Squeegee, towel or paper towel to dry the area.

Normally, you should clean your shower at least once a week. If many people use the shower on a daily basis, or if someone is sick, Heinz says it is best to clean it every day.

Charles Gerba, PhD, a microbiology professor at the University of Arizona, told [Reader's Digest](#) that bathmats and other fabrics are some of the dirtiest items, because people step on them with dirty shoes, and they stay wet and damp the longest.

Bathtubs' path to bacterial and fungal infections

If you have a cut on your body, you can introduce bacteria or fungus to the area during a shower.

"You can get athlete's foot or a staph infection just through the tub and not cleaning," Heinz says. She adds the film on the bottom of the shower or bathtub is a clear sign of where bacteria is living. Make sure to scrub the area, clean it and let it dry completely. If you notice discoloration in your shower or bathtub, Heinz recommends cleaning it immediately.

Bathroom cleaning tips

"Your toilet can aerosolize and throw germs up onto surfaces within about five feet," Heinz says. "With flat surfaces, it can collect dust or other things that are in the air, so make sure you're wiping those down frequently. At least weekly, if not daily."

Heinz recommends cleaning areas of your bathroom twice. The first time is for cleaning, the second time is for disinfecting. And don't forget about the soap dispenser! Heinz says since this is one of the first places people reach to clean their hands, it's one of the dirtiest places in the bathroom.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the surface you're wiping stays wet the entire time of contact to make sure germs are killed. You should clean surfaces with water and soap and scrub them before sanitizing or disinfecting them.

According to the [CDC](#), "**Cleaning** removes most germs, dirt and impurities from surfaces. Clean with water, soap and scrubbing. **Sanitizing** reduces germs to levels public health codes or regulations consider safe. Sanitizing is done with weaker bleach solutions or sanitizing sprays. Clean surfaces before you sanitize them.

Disinfecting kills most germs on surfaces and objects. Disinfecting is done with stronger bleach solutions or chemicals."

Don't mix multiple chemicals

"With any products that you're going to be using, I'd make sure you're looking at the warning labels. I would definitely not mix chemicals," Heinz says. "If you are going to use one chemical and then use another, I'd make sure that you're rinsing thoroughly, making sure it dries, and then you can use the next product."

If you're diluting a chemical-based product, the CDC [says](#) to only use water at room temperature. Adding that an extra safety precaution is to wear eye and skin protection (like gloves) and store chemicals out of children's reach.

Don't forget your toothbrush!

Does your toothbrush hang out on the bathroom counter? You might want to rethink that.

"If you keep your toothbrush on the counter, it likely has fecal matter on it. So, put your toothbrush away or switch it often and clean it," Heinz says.

Stop the spread | Toilet style

Here's a habit change you can consider. Instead of flushing the toilet and just walking away, close the lid before you flush and keep the germs inside.

"Make sure when you're flushing the toilet, go ahead and close the lid. That's going to minimize the number of germs that are spraying all over your bathroom and aerosolizing," Heinz says.

Heinz adds another fun fact about the dirtiness of toilets – the minerals in the water. She says the minerals in toilet water can get stuck to the toilet bowl, which can also be a breeding ground for germs.