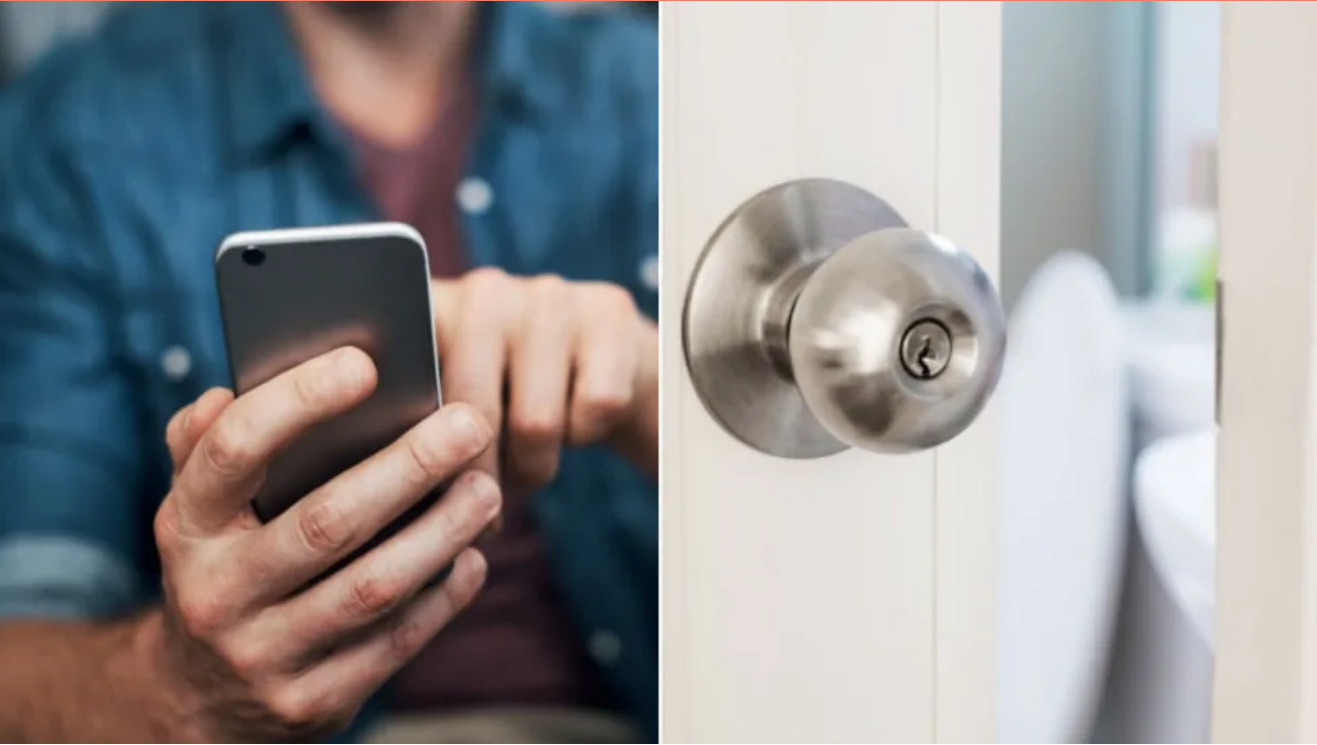


HOME & GARDEN

26 THINGS YOU TOUCH ALL THE TIME THAT ARE COVERED IN GERMS

Your toilet is immaculate compared to these things



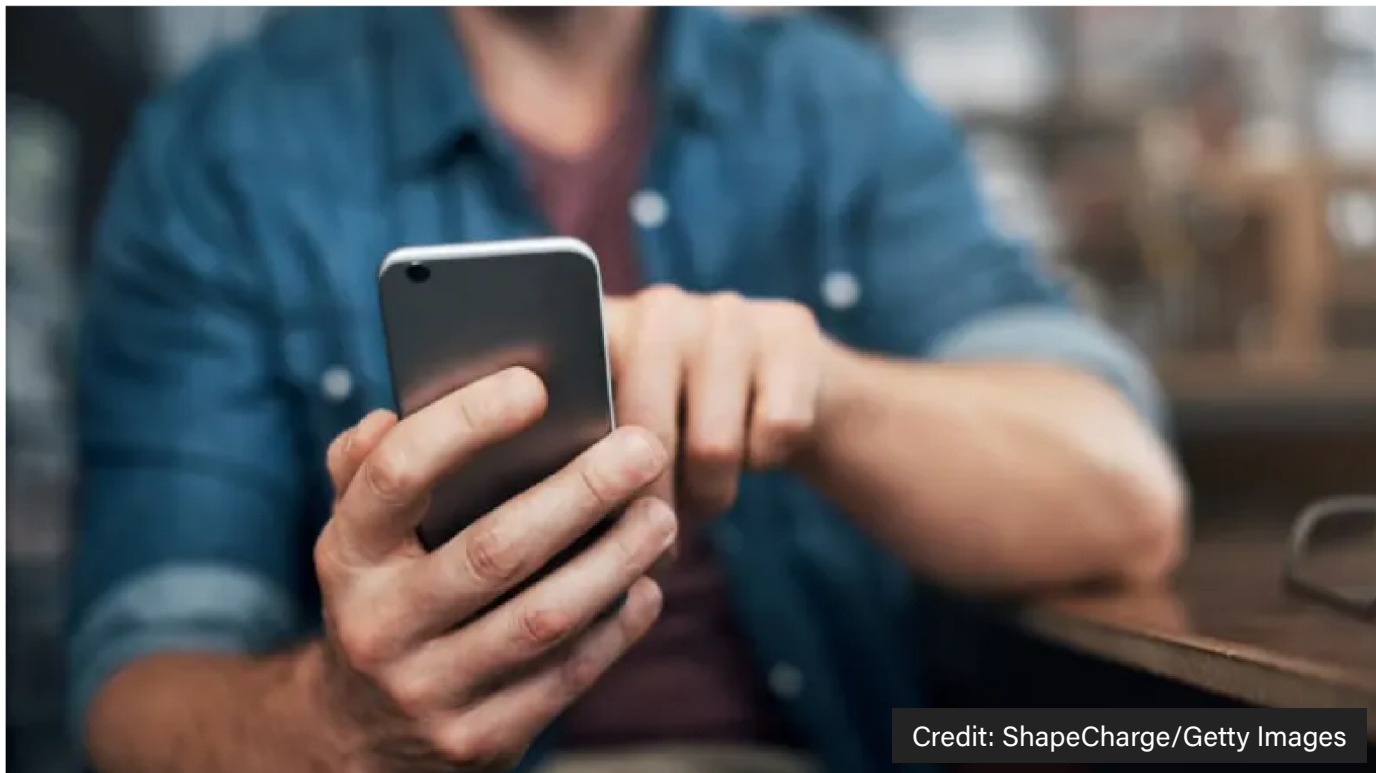
Written by [Reviewed Staff](#) and [Rachel Moskowitz Levin](#)
Updated March 4, 2020

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Public restrooms bring shivers down our spines. They’re not always well-kept, they’re used by thousands of strangers throughout the day, and so naturally, they’re full of bacteria and germs. But what if I told you that germs like Staphylococcus, salmonella, and E.coli are right in your home, in your purse, and even in your back pocket? There are germs lurking everywhere—and not just during cold and flu season.

It may not occur to you to clean certain areas because perhaps their function is to clean things themselves, like your shower. When we neglect them, however, they can be some of the worst offenders. Here are some of the more disgusting things in your life that you should consider cleaning:

1. Your phone



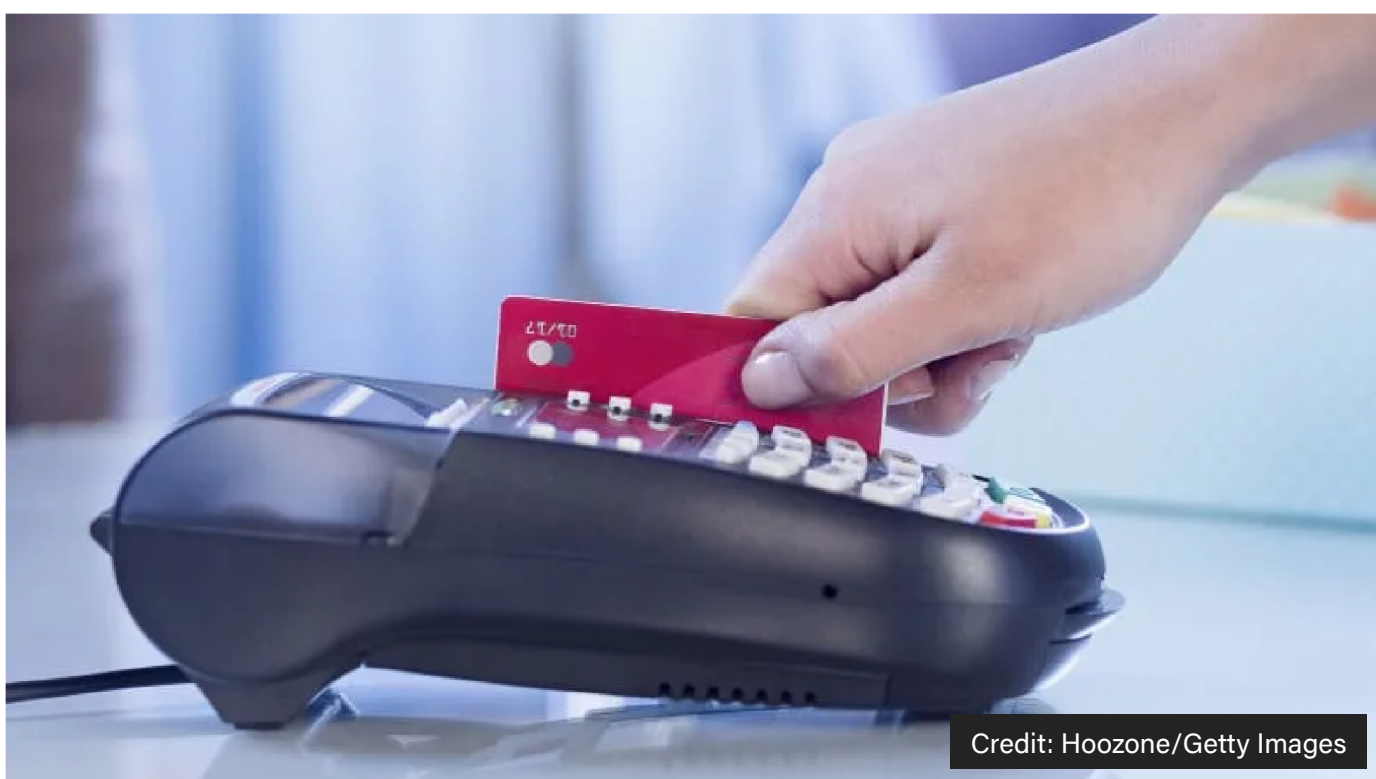
Your phone is much dirtier than you think.

Your phone touches your fingers, your face, and all sorts of surfaces throughout the day—so it's no surprise that it's a haven for germs, even dangerous ones that cause staph infections or the flu. In fact, **one study** found that the average high schooler's phone has 17,000 different types of bacteria, making it 10 times dirtier than a typical toilet seat.

You should be cleaning your phone about once a week, at least. You can dilute rubbing alcohol with water, then spray it on your phone and wipe it dry with a **soft cloth**. Or you may have seen **UV phone sanitizers** that promise to eliminate 99.999% of the bacteria on your phone. We prefer the **PhoneSoap Smartphone Sanitizer** if you're going to go that route.

Read more about **how to clean your phone here**.

2. Your credit cards



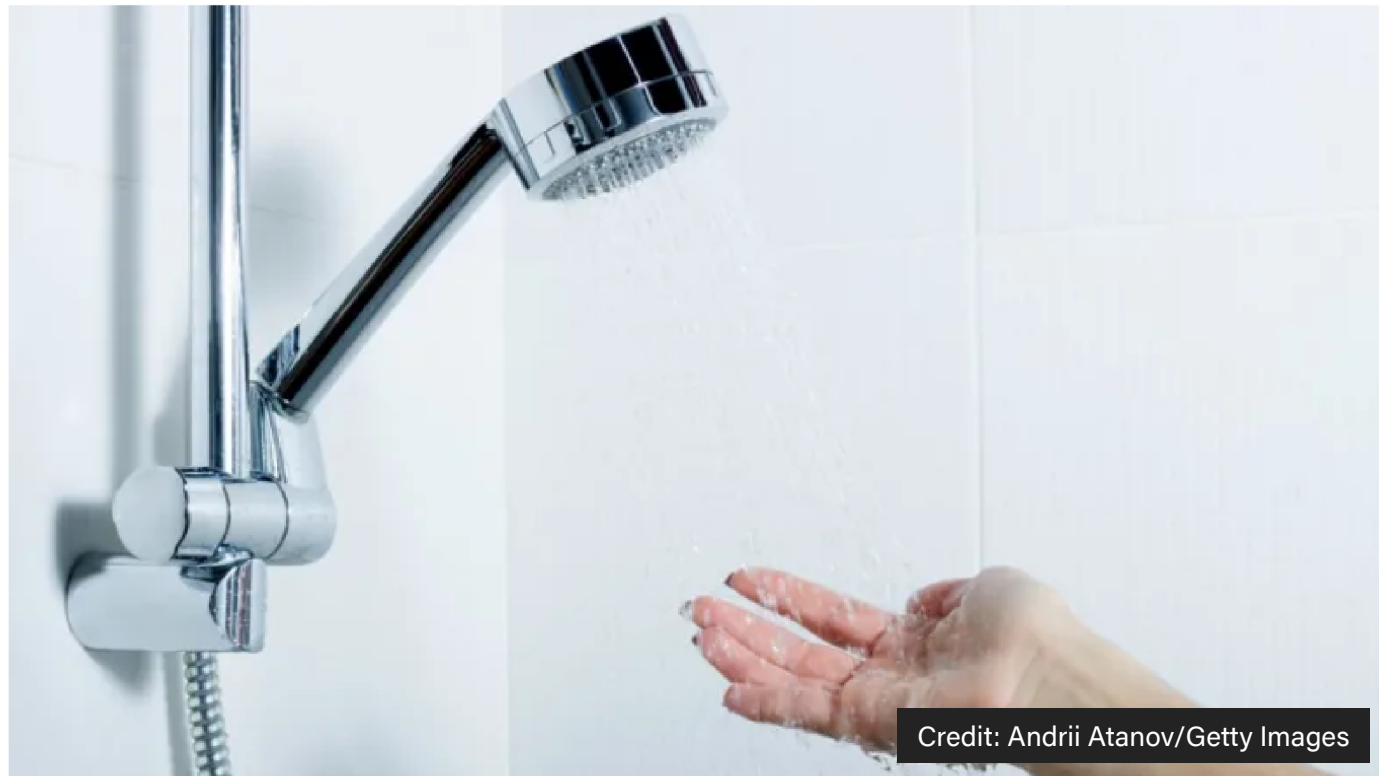
A McDonald's door handle is cleaner than your credit card.

According to **a study by LendEDU**, our credit and debit cards are the **most bacteria-covered things in our purses**, even more so than the dollar bills or coins you find lying around. Most people think cash and coins are more bacteria-ridden than cards—but

that isn't true, the study revealed. You can swipe them with an antiseptic wipe after every few uses to prevent bacteria from building up or place your cards in a UV light sanitizer (the same ones that are used to clean phones).

Read more about **how to clean your credit cards here**.

3. Your shower and shower curtain



Credit: Andrii Atanov/Getty Images

You'd expect that something you use to clean yourself would also be clean, but that's not the case.

Over half of Americans confess they only clean a surface—**like their showers**—when there's visible dirt. But here's the cringe-worthy truth: Just because you can't see any grime or mildew, doesn't mean it isn't there. Studies have revealed that potentially harmful germs like streptococcus, staph, and E.coli all are commonly found in bathtubs (yuck!). And that soap scum that looks innocent enough? It's actually a breeding ground for certain types of bacteria. You're going to want to use some all-purpose bathroom cleaner to remove (and prevent) mildew and mold. As for the grout—which we all know can get really gross really fast—our experts found that **Oxygen bleach is your best bet**.

And whatever you do, don't forget to clean your shower curtain, too. Since you hop into the shower daily to get yourself clean, you might not have realized that the **shower curtain was dirty**. But it's probably coated with disgusting soap scum and possibly mold and mildew, none of which you want to come in contact with every day. No worries: all you need to do is run it in your washer on a delicate cycle with two towels, which will help scrub it clean, and then hang it out to dry.

Read more about **how to clean your shower and shower curtain here**.

4. Your kitchen sponge



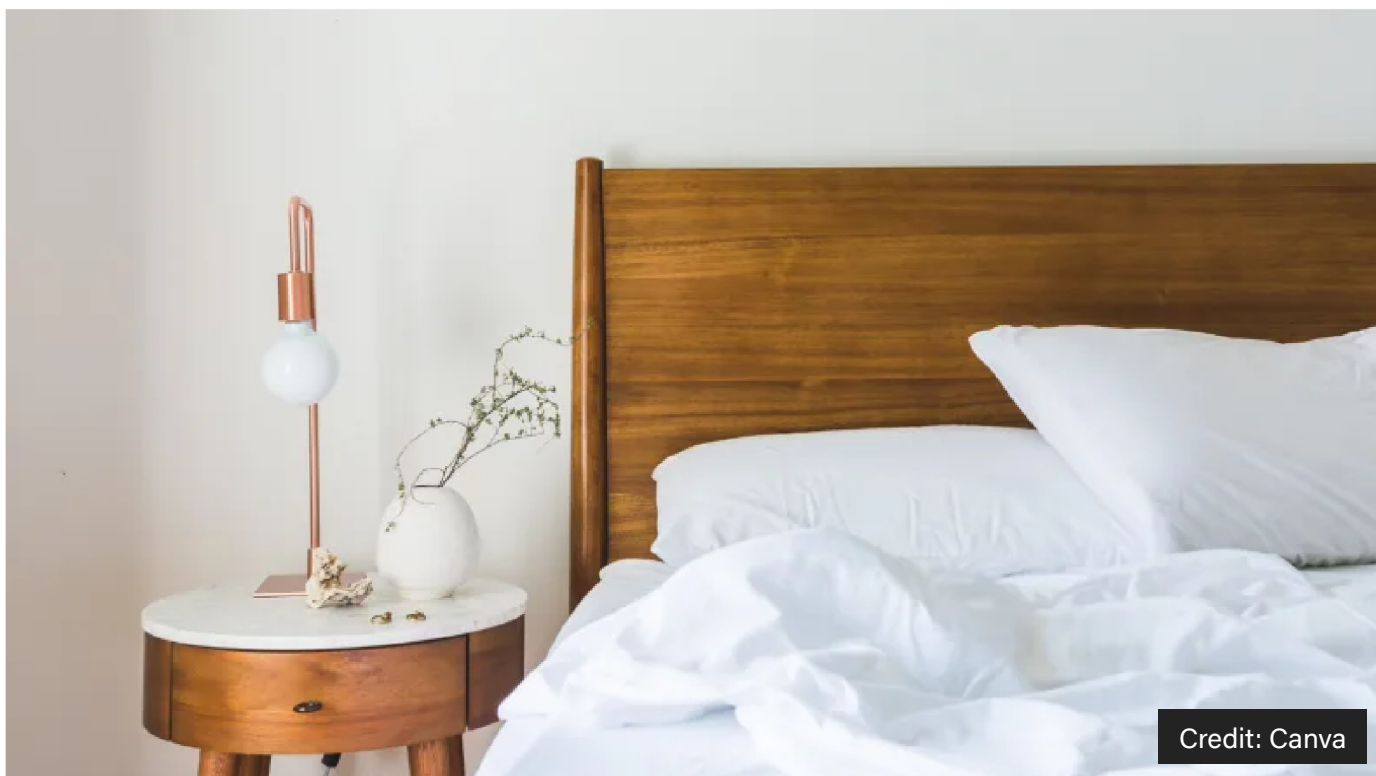
Credit: DeepBlue4You/Getty Images

A kitchen sponge is one of the dirtiest things in the average house.

Over 75 percent of **kitchen sponges and dishrags** that were tested had either salmonella or E.coli germs on them. To **clean your sponge**, our experts suggest placing it on the top rack of your dishwasher and putting it on the “heated dry” setting. Another good rule of thumb to follow? "Never use a multipurpose sponge to clean up after raw meat," our senior lab testing technician, Jonathan Chan, warns. "Bacteria that can make you very sick can thrive inside a sponge." Keep in mind, too, that you should change your sponge every week, **according to one study** that found 362 different types of bacteria on the average kitchen sponge.

Read more about **how to clean your kitchen sponge here**.

5. Your pillows



Credit: Canva

Your pillows are full of dead bugs, oh, you didn't know?

Brace yourself. I’m about to drop a huge bomb on you. Your pillows are filled with unpleasant things. In fact, after two years, approximately 1/3 of a pillow’s weight contains dead skin, dust mites (which eat the dead skin), and droppings (poop from all those mites). Additionally, 10% of people and 80% of allergy sufferers are allergic to proteins found in waste and decomposed dust mites. It would have never occurred to me that bed pillows are the ideal breeding grounds for dust mites and the flu. Experts

recommend **washing your pillows every 6 months** and replacing them every couple of years. Don't know what pillows to buy? We've got you covered with the **top-rated pillows we've ever tested**.

Read more about **how to clean your pillows here**.

6. Your remote control



Remote controls are touched by every family member—even the pets infect them.

“**Remote controls** are touched by every family member—even the pets tend to sit on them and slobber them occasionally—so the surface of your remote control is the perfect host for germs and bacteria,” says Lily Cameron, a cleaning professional and supervisor at **Fantastic Services**. You should clean your remotes at least once per week, more if someone in the household is sick. You can wipe it down using a cloth dipped in rubbing alcohol and clean the build-up of dirt inside the buttons using a toothpick. Make sure you remove the batteries before cleaning.

Read more about **how to clean your remote and other handheld devices here**.

7. Your kitchen sink



Ironically, the place where you clean your dishes is actually one of the dirtiest.

Ironically, **the place where you clean your dishes is actually one of the dirtiest**, with nearly half of kitchen sinks containing some type of coliform bacteria. Our best cleaning advice is to mix 1 teaspoon of baking soda and a ¼ cup of lemon juice, then apply the mixture all over the surface of the sink. Let it sit overnight and in the morning, rinse it with boiling hot water. Then dry the sink using a clean towel. If your sink is stainless steel, we recommend **Bar Keeper's Friend**. The cleanser has over 1,000 positive reviews on Amazon because it's so powerful at removing everything from grime to soap scum to icky bacteria.

8. Your toothbrush and toothbrush holder



You're probably brushing your teeth with fecal matter

Your **toothbrush** is the perfect place for bacteria to hide. In fact, **you're probably brushing your teeth with fecal matter**. To minimize this, **flush with the lid down** to keep fecal matter from spreading more easily. Make sure you change your toothbrush every three months, as well as after each time you get sick to prevent the illness from coming back.

Have you ever cleaned the toothbrush holder? Next to your dish sponge, it's the **germiest thing in the house**. It's one of the easiest things to clean, though. Just throw it in the dishwasher or hand wash with dish soap if it's delicate.

9. Your coffee maker



Coffee with a side of bacteria? No thanks.

In **one analysis**, samples taken from coffee makers tested positive for staphylococcus, streptococcus, bacillus cereus, and E.coli. Not exactly what you want out of your morning cuppa! Even the **drip trays are gross**. Researchers recently found that the leftover liquid was host to between 35 and 67 genera of different bacteria. Pro tip: **denture cleaning tablets** can help you **clean your coffee maker**.

Read more about **how to clean your coffee maker here**.

10. Your carpets



Carpets are approximately 4,000 times dirtier than a toilet seat.

Philip Tierno Jr., Ph.D., a microbiologist and immunologist, told **Men's Health** that carpets contain about 200,000 bacteria per square inch and are approximately 4,000 times dirtier than a toilet seat. And consider this: Tierno says even **the best vacuum cleaner** doesn't reach the bottom of the carpet, leaving behind tons of bacteria. However, you should still vacuum at least once a week. On top of that, have rugs professionally steam-cleaned at least once a year, or learn how to **clean your carpet yourself**. If that seems like too much effort, invest in machine-washable area rugs, like **Ruggable**.

Read more about **how to clean your carpets here**.

11. Your doorknobs and light switches



Everyone handles your doorknobs and lightswitches, and you don't know what they touched previously.

Doorknobs and switches are among the dirtiest parts of your home. Everyone who comes in handles them, and you don't know what they touched previously. Have you ever cleaned a knob or switch? If not, start today with some simple disinfectant wipes. You should do this constantly, especially if someone's sick.

12. Your cutting board



Credit: Betsey Goldwasser / Reviewed

Cutting boards tend to be bacteria havens.

Two words: raw meat. That's one of many things that likely goes on your cutting boards so it's understandable that they tend to be bacteria havens. And while some of **the best cutting boards** that we've tested are wood, they also **require special care**, especially if you're cutting meat on them. Our kitchen and cooking editor, Cassidy Olsen, recommends using a water and vinegar solution to thoroughly sanitize your cutting board after you wash it with regular soap and water.

Read more about **how to clean your cutting board here**.

13. Your backpack



Credit: Reviewed / Jackson Ruckar

When you get home and put your backpack down, you're spreading germs from outside.

If you take off a backpack and drop it on the floor of your office, a bar, or the bus, that pack is covered with dirt and germs. When you get home and put it down, you're spreading the germs around your space. To prevent this from happening, **your backpack needs a cleaning**. Vacuum out the inside every few months, or if it's made of fabric, put it into a pillowcase or a big mesh laundry bag and tuck it into your washer. You can use regular detergent on a cold, delicate cycle. Hang it dry, and voila!

14. Your countertops



Credit: Canva

Most people are disinfecting their kitchen counters wrong.

Kitchen counters are crawling with bacteria and one of the main reasons why is because **most people are using antibacterial wipes wrong**. On the **CDC's website**, it explains that "disinfection usually requires the product to remain on the surface for a certain period of time (e.g. letting it stand for 3 to 5 minutes)." That means you'll need to use enough wipes to keep your counters wet for up to five minutes if you really want to kill all of the bacteria.

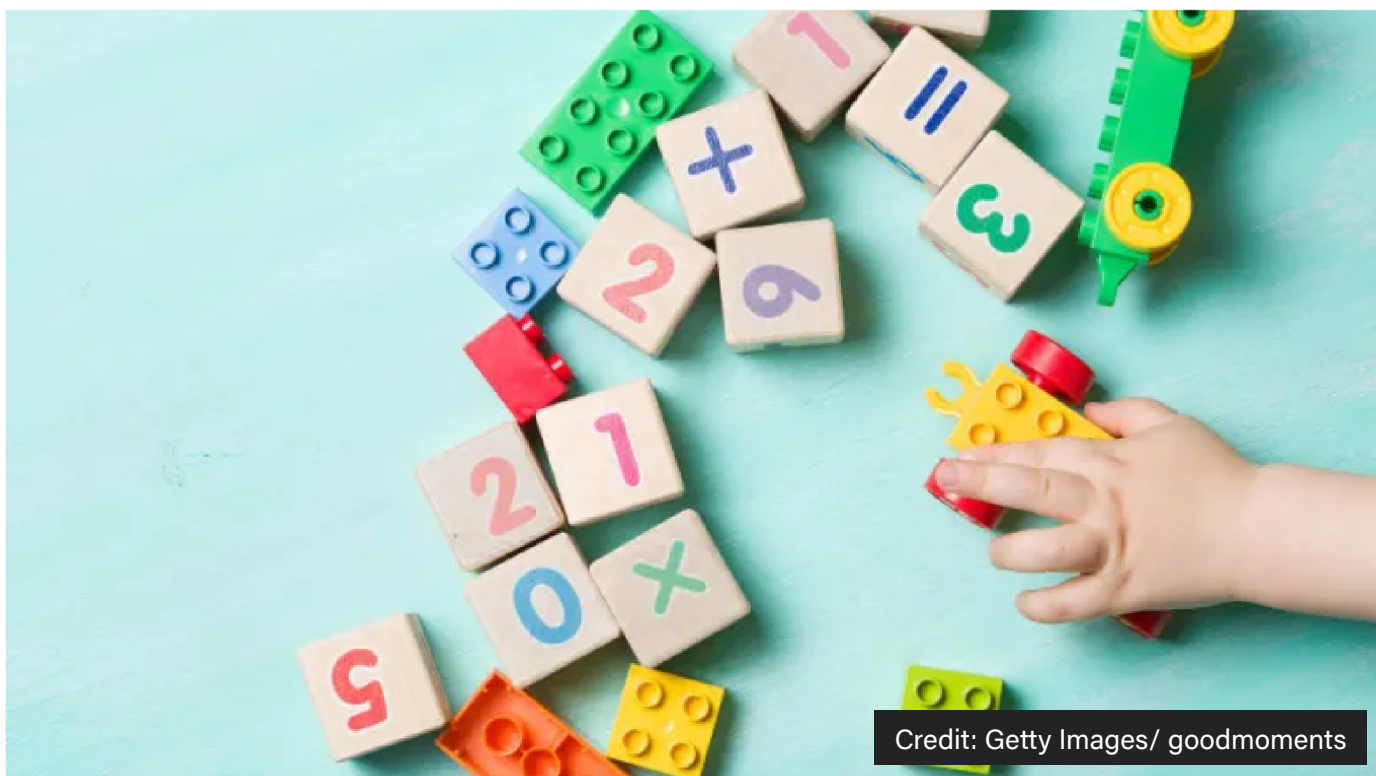
15. Your pets' toys



Our furry friends bring in a lot of different kinds of bacteria.

A recent study found that homes with pets had not only a higher concentration of bacteria but many more types and species of bacteria, too. A lot of that bacteria can be found in their toy basket: Our furry friends slobber all over their toys, which primes them as hotbeds for mold, yeast, and other bacteria. But don't worry, toss stuffed or soft toys once they start to tear or smell. For rubber toys, you should soak them in a solution of one part water and one part white vinegar for 5 to 10 minutes, then run the rubber toys through the dishwasher and let air dry.

16. Your kids' toys



It's important to clean your child's toys for their own safety.

While dirty pet toys might seem like a no-brainer to you, your kids' toys are filthy as well. Microbiologist Dr. Susan Witterier **tested 50 bath toys and sippy cups** and found mold and/or bacteria on all 50 of them. Worse, they found fecal matter present in 20 percent of the sippy cups. Needless to say, it's important for every parent to learn how to clean and disinfect them. **While it'll take a few steps**, it'll be worth it.

Read more about **how to disinfect your kids' toys here**.

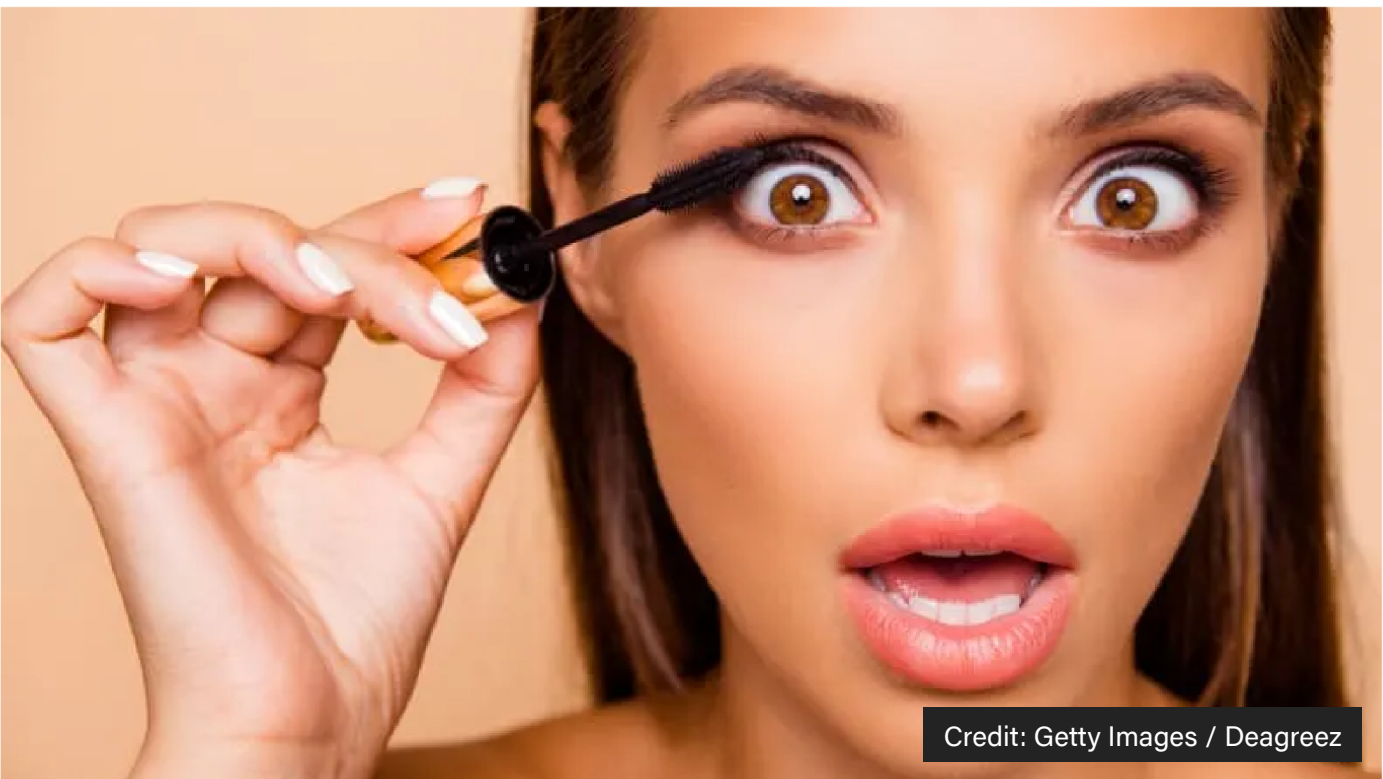
17. Your keyboard



Keyboards are traps for dirt, dust, and bacteria.

Keyboards are gross. Over time, they just become traps for dirt, dust, and bacteria. According to multiple studies, **your keyboard is probably even dirtier than a toilet seat**, so finding a good way to clean it and keep it hygienic is crucial, especially if you want to stop the spread of germs. You can use disinfectant wipes or if you’re feeling adventurous, **we tried a cleaning gel on Amazon** that’s perfect for reaching all of the crevices in your keyboard, car vents, and other imperfectly-shaped objects that you use on the daily.

18. Your mascara



Your mascara can be contaminated by bacteria, causing eye infections.

When you put on your mascara, bacteria like *Streptococcus pneumonia*, which live on your eyelids, can be transferred to the brush and into the tube. Those bacteria can multiply and cause pink eye and other eye infections. Sounds scary, right? To avoid this, make sure you remove your mascara thoroughly every night, never introduce other liquids into the tube, and replace your mascara monthly (an argument for buying **drugstore mascara**).

19. Your oven handle



Credit: Lolostock/Getty Images

Appliance handles often get neglected, which means they're filthy.

Appliance handles—like that of your oven door—are some of the **worst offenders** when it comes to hosting bacteria. Think about it. You prep raw meat and, before washing your hands, go to put it in the oven. Add to that any oil or grease that splatters from the stovetop and you have a recipe for a disgusting door. It's an area that you don't automatically think to clean, either, so you probably rarely show it any sanitizing love. Luckily, disinfectant wipes will do the trick or some warm, soapy water.

Read more about **how to clean your appliance handles here**.

20. Your bedding



Credit: Canva

When's the last time you washed your comforter? Be honest.

How often do you wash your bedsheets? If it's been more than a week or two at the most, you're sleeping surrounded by body oils, bacteria, dead skin cells, and dust mites. You need to step up your washing frequency. Just make sure you read the care tag first. If you use a duvet or **top sheet**, you'll want to wash those regularly. **Comforters**, on the other hand, **need washing** a few times a year.

Read more about **how to wash your bedding here**.

21. Your refrigerator



Credit: Getty Images / AndrewRafalsky

Is your refrigerator at the right temp to ward off bacteria?

Considering it's where we keep our food, we should all be **cleaning our refrigerators** more thoroughly and more often. It's a common misconception that bacteria can't grow at lower temperatures, but **some bacteria** can still grow in cooler settings, just more slowly. To play it safe, make sure your refrigerator temp is **always under 40°F** (37° is ideal). The best time to clean your fridge is before you go grocery shopping or when it's nearly empty. Wipe down all the surfaces and crevices using a quart of warm water and two tablespoons of baking soda. Rinse with clean water and dry.

Read more about **how to clean your refrigerator here**.

22. Your hairbrush



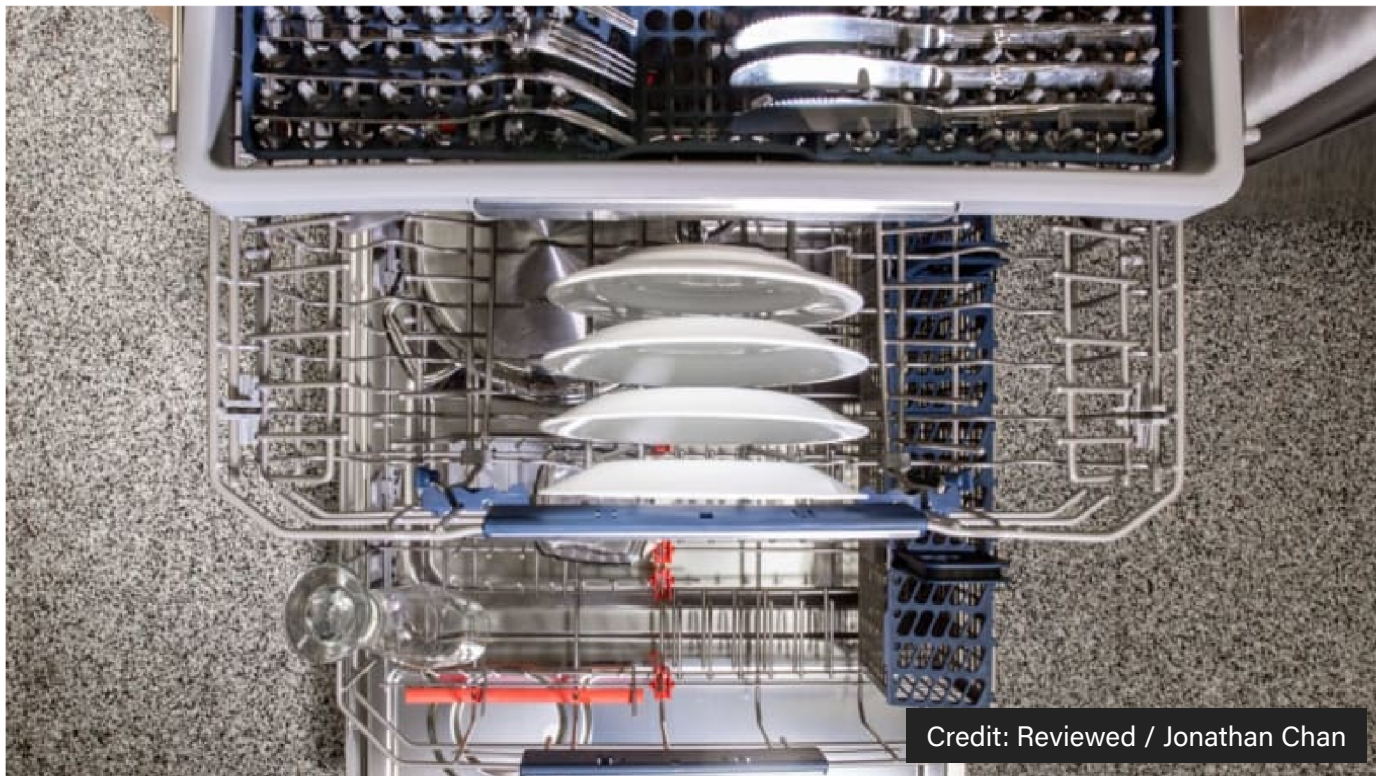
Credit: Getty Images / CatherineL-prod

Back away from the hairbrush.

Your beloved brush is covered with disgusting things that you're applying to your clean hair every time you brush. About once a month, you're going to want to remove the hair, soak it in warm water with a few drops of shampoo and some baking soda. Rinse it in clear water and dry on a towel. If you have a plastic brush, you can try washing it in the dishwasher.

Read more about **how to clean your hairbrush here**.

23. Your dishwasher



If you've noticed food specks on your dishes, that could be an indication of a dirty filter.

Most **modern dishwashers** have a filter that catches gunk and food residue. It's usually at the bottom of the tub, under the spray arm. If you've suddenly noticed food specks on your dishes, that could be an indication of a dirty filter. Simply remove it, clean it with a soft brush, and rinse it before you put it back in place. You may see a big difference with the next load.

Read more about **how to clean your dishwasher here**.

24. Your luggage



Don't bring bedbugs home from vacation with you.

When you return from trips, you could be bringing home more than just a tan and a pile of laundry—you **could be bringing home bed bugs**, too, according to **a study**. Bed bugs are attracted to the bacteria on dirty clothes. So if you toss them into your suitcase, guess where the critters will crawl into? Some ways to avoid this happening: scan your hotel room for infestations before settling in, keep your dirty laundry in an airtight plastic bag, and keep your suitcase on a luggage rack as bed bugs can't climb up slippery legs. If you suspect you may have brought pests home with you, the best thing to do is put everything into **the laundry** immediately on a hot cycle, which kills the bed bugs.

Read more about **how to protect your luggage here**.

25. Your washing machine



A washing machine that smells bad means that your clothes will likely smell bad, too.

If you have a **front-load washer**, you may have noticed a noxious odor emanating from it. Dirt, detergent, and liquid fabric softener can build up in the rubber gasket at the front, creating a home for mold and mildew. The odor can transfer to your clothes, making the problem even bigger. Luckily, this is a problem you can fix. Run the empty washer on a hot, normal cycle with a cup of bleach in the dispenser about once a month and regularly wipe out the gasket after every load.

Read more about **how to clean your washing machine here**.

26. Your furniture



You're long overdue for a deep-clean of all of your furniture.

Last but not least, pay attention to all of the furniture in your home. I'm talking mattresses, mirrors, couches, wood, and even outside furniture made of wicker or metal. When was the last time you cleaned these things? Whatever material they're made of, it's probably high time to give **all your furniture a once-over**. Cleaning not only lessens allergens but also helps prolong the life of your furniture.

Read more about **how to clean your furniture here**.

If you’ve made it this far, you’re probably just about ready to hop in the shower (after you clean it, of course). While we can’t avoid handling these disgusting things every day, we can make sure we minimize the spreading of germs by avoiding touching our faces, washing our hands often, and for the love of God, cleaning these things off more often.

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