

# The Surprising 9 Jobs With the Highest Germ Exposure -- and What You Can do About It

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by [www.SixWise.com](http://www.SixWise.com)

When it comes to germs in the workplace, certain workers may be exposed to 20 times more bacteria at their jobs than others ... and some of the germiest jobs may surprise you.

The findings come as part of a series of studies called "Germs in the Workplace," led by the University of Arizona's Dr. Charles Gerba. He and colleagues visited offices and swabbed a total of 616 surfaces, including desks, phones and computers.

Teachers' phones, keyboards, and computer mice were the germiest items tested.

Workers were asked not to do any pre-cleaning before the researchers took their samples. "In fact, they were asked not to alter their regular workday routines, from eating at their desks to cleaning," the report stated.

### The Nine Germiest Jobs

Leading the list of germey jobs were, not surprisingly, teachers. The average bacteria per square inch of their workplace surfaces were 17,800, versus 900 for a job at the lower end of the list, lawyers.

Making up the top nine on the list, from most to least germs, were:

1. Teacher
2. Accountant
3. Banker
4. Radio DJ
5. Doctor
6. Television producer
7. Consultant
8. Publicist
9. Lawyer

### The Four Germiest Surfaces

Overall, the researchers found that offices have fewer bacteria than in the past. "We were pleased to find a decrease in bacteria levels," Gerba said. "Perhaps people are becoming more aware of germs in their office and doing something about it."

Still, bacteria were present and in large numbers. "Surfaces regularly used by teachers, accountants, and bankers harbored nearly two to 20 times more bacteria per square inch when compared to other professions," the report stated.

Overall, phones, followed by desks, had more germs than any other office surfaces.

Where is all this bacteria hiding? In plain site, it turns out. The researchers found that the following four surfaces had the most bacteria (in this order):

- Phones
- Desks
- Computer keyboard
- Computer mouse

The reasons for germey phones and computer apparatuses are obvious -- dirt from your hands, and mouth, can easily get transferred onto these often-used items. Desks, too, can harbor dirt from your hands, but what is often not considered is a desk's other uses.

A survey by the American Dietician Association found that while 57 percent of workers snack at their desks once a day or more, 20 percent never clean them.

"Desks are really bacteria cafeterias," said Dr. Gerba. "They're breakfast buffets, lunch tables and snack bars, as we spend more and more hours at the office. Germ levels on desks could be considered a business liability."

Another study by Gerba found that your desk may hold 400 times more bacteria than the average toilet seat.

"We don't think twice about eating at our desks, even though the average desk has 100 times more bacteria than a kitchen table and 400 times more bacteria than the average toilet," says

Gerba. "Without cleaning, a small area on your desk or phone can sustain millions of bacteria that could potentially cause illness."

### **How to Keep Your Office Space Clean**

According to Dr. Gerba, frequent [hand washing](#) and cleaning your office space with one disinfecting wipe a day can help kill harmful germs (the study was funded by the Clorox Company, which makes disinfecting wipes).

### **Sources**

[MedicineNet.com: Top 9 Jobs Where Bacteria Thrive](#)

[ABC: Is Your Job Making You Sick?](#)

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