

Hygiene Council: New Best Practice Recommendations

A new study by the Hygiene Council shows that Britain is the dirtiest country in the developed world, with bacteria like E.coli commonly being found in our homes. So what are we doing wrong? And how can we change our hygiene habits to protect our families from illness?

The Hygiene Council has released new recommendations addressing the study findings, focusing on targeted cleaning and three key areas:

- Surface cleaning and disinfection
- Good hand hygiene
- Food preparation, cooking and storage

Surface cleaning and disinfection

Harmful germs can survive on surfaces in the home for significant periods of time which can then be transferred to hands, other surfaces and other people. Research shows that not everyone knows which surfaces pose the greatest risk of infection.

The surfaces that should be cleaned most often in the home are those where the level of germs is likely to be highest. Target these **'hygiene hotspots'** with a quality disinfectant or antibacterial cleaner:

- Cleaning cloths
- Chopping boards and utensils
- Kitchen work surfaces, including the sink
- Toilet seat and flush handle
- Sink, bath and shower
- Rubbish bin lid

It is also important to regularly clean and disinfect those surfaces that are frequently touched:

- Door handles
- Taps
- Fridge door handle
- Light switches
- Telephone receivers

The Hygiene Council recommends targeted cleaning to maximise the killing of germs, protecting your family from infection and use your time efficiently. Targeted surface cleaning is particularly important if someone in the household is ill.

Cloths are 'bug superhighway of the kitchen'

Research by the Hygiene Council shows a quarter of the UK's kitchen cloths harbour E. coli bacteria. To ensure your cloths do not become the bug superhighway of the kitchen:

- Use an antibacterial cleaner when using a kitchen cloth, and replace your cloths regularly
- If using hardwearing cloths, try soaking them overnight in disinfectant liquid to kill harmful bacteria
- Disposable antibacterial wipes can also ensure that potentially hazardous bacteria will not be spread across different surfaces if used correctly (use a new cloth for each surface you clean)

Good hand hygiene

- Hands should always be washed in the following 10 high-risk situations:
 - Before and after handling raw food
 - Before eating or feeding children
 - After using the toilet or changing a child's nappy
 - After touching animals or their equipment
 - After contact with blood or body fluids
 - After coughing, sneezing or blowing the nose
 - After contact with a potentially contaminated site (e.g. cleaning cloth, bin)
 - Before applying contact lenses
 - Before and after giving medication or first aid
 - Whenever hands appear dirty

- Antibacterial soap and running water should be used
- If soap and water are not available, then alcohol-based hand foams or rubs can be used. These effectively kill germs but are not cleaners so will not remove any dirt

Food preparation, cooking and storage

Incorrect cooking, handling or storage of food is one of the key causes of contamination and food-borne illness.

- Wash hands with an antibacterial soap after each stage of food preparation, particularly after handling raw meat and poultry
- Prepare raw meat, poultry and seafood away from all other foods
- Food should be cooked thoroughly and evenly to at least 70°C - check that food is piping hot in the middle before serving and that poultry juices run clear
- When reheating, food should be warmed to at least 85°C and should not be reheated more than once
- Always wash your hands with antibacterial soap before eating
- Do not leave cooked food sitting at room temperature for longer than 2 hours
- Ensure food is covered or put into appropriate storage containers – it's particularly important to protect food from exposure to insects and animals
- Take care to avoid contact between raw and cooked food – use separate chopping boards
- Prevent food juices dripping onto other foods
- Avoid eating damaged food or food from damaged packaging
- Thaw frozen meat, fish and poultry thoroughly before cooking.