

Children's Health Update

New Study Reveals Germiest Hot Spots At School

(NAPSA)—Each day, about 55 million students and 7 million staff attend the more than 130,000 public and private schools in the United States. At least they're supposed to attend. All too many are out sick. In fact, more than seven in 10—some 38 million—school-aged children miss school sometime during the school year due to illness or injury.

A recent study conducted by Dr. Charles Gerba and the University of Arizona in a K–12 school system may have found the reason.

The researchers swabbed classrooms and common-area surfaces at several schools to determine the relative numbers of bacteria on frequently touched surfaces. The germiest place at school, they discovered, is the cafeteria table. Other contaminated sites include:

- Computer keyboards and mice
- Bathroom paper towel dispenser handles
- Water fountains
- Bathroom sink faucets
- Library tables.

Explains Dr. Aliza Lifshitz, internist at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and editor of *Viday Salud.com*, the largest source of health information and wellness tools in Spanish on the web, "Some bacteria are capable of causing infections and tend to collect on frequently touched surfaces—particularly in areas where there is a lot of hand-to-mouth contact, like the cafeteria table. To help your children minimize the spread of germs, encourage them to wash their hands frequently or use an alcohol-based hand rub, especially when sharing school



In the school cafeteria, the biggest threat to children's health and happiness may not be the kid who wants to eat your French fries. It may be too small to see.

supplies or taking turns using the computer."

Dr. Lifshitz has the following suggestions to help keep a cleaner classroom:

• **Disinfect hot spots:** Even if a classroom starts out clean, germs can—and do—build up all day. Teachers may want to implement a routine of frequently disinfecting germ hot spots in the classroom, such as desktops and doorknobs, with disinfecting wipes. This can help supplement what the custodian is already doing.

• **Arm them with the right tools:** Parents should consider bringing teachers hand sanitizer and canisters of Clorox Disinfecting Wipes.

• **Avoid touching surfaces in the bathroom:** Teach kids to use paper towels to press the flush lever on the toilet and when turning water faucets on and off.

• **Walk the walk at home:** Children may be bringing more than just homework home to their families. That's why it is important for parents to wipe down frequently touched surfaces, including the remote control, countertops, phones and light switches.