

Your Kitchen—Yes, Yours—Is Teeming With Germs

(NAPSA)—The germiest spot you're apt to encounter on an average day probably isn't where you think.

It's not an airport bathroom...It's not a public water fountain...And, no, all the throw-the-bums-out fervor notwithstanding, it's not on the floor of Congress either.

It's your very own kitchen sink—where more than 500,000 bacteria per square inch are likely lurking this very second in the drain alone.

In fact, according to the experts, the kitchen as a whole is the most bacteria-ridden room in a home. Meaning, if you're worried about catching a cold or the flu—or worse—it's the likeliest spot for infections to spread as germs are transferred from a contaminated item (e.g., a cutting board) to your hands and then on to other parts of your body.

"Bacteria couldn't ask for a better place to grow," Charles Gerba, a professor of environmental microbiology at the University of Arizona who's also known as "Dr. Germ," has said.

So which other code-red kitchen items should you be preparing to wage germ warfare against? Read on.

- **Sponges.** The moist micro-crevices that make them so effective at cleaning up messes also mean they're a breeding ground for bacteria—especially if they sit wet for days with bits of food on them. If you must use them, Dr. Neil Schachter, author of "The Good Doctor's Guide to Colds and Flu," advises: "Wet your sponge and then pop it in the microwave for two minutes to eliminate germs."

- **Cutting boards.** Not to freak you out, but they average about 200 percent more fecal bacteria than the typical toilet seat, according to Gerba. At the very least, use separate boards for raw meat, say, and salad.



Sinks are particularly bacteria-ridden.

- **Dish towels.** Yes, they're pretty, but the E. coli and staph bacteria they've been linked to aren't. Washing them with bleach—the key ingredient, by the way, recommended for cleaning those aforementioned icky kitchen sinks—has traditionally had an obvious drawback: The towels needed to be replaced more frequently. Well, now even tightwads can feel free to bleach away. Thanks to the same technology high-end salons, spas, restaurants and coffeehouses have been using for years to pass muster with the health police, a new line of 100-percent cotton BleachSafe® Home kitchen towels from Blu Sand lets you easily remove germs (and stains) without fading or damaging the fabric's color (www.Bleachsafehome.com or 1-800-600-4111). Plus, 5 percent of sales go to the Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation to help fight breast cancer.

- **Faucets.** You know that metal aeration screen at the end that's supposed to be so good for the environment because it reduces water flow? (Trust us: It's there.) Touch it with dirty fingers or food, and we're talking a potential wall of pathogens called biofilm.

Still think your kitchen is the exception? Ninety percent of sinks harbor salmonella, et. al., that can make you one sick puppy.



Note to Editors: October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month.