



## Limiting virus spread through hygiene intervention

“Impact of a hygiene intervention on virus spread in an office building,” Reynolds K.A et al. Southwest Environmental Health Sciences Center. Summary by Devin Ritter.

Viral diseases can wreak havoc on both the economic and personal aspects of a workplace. Year after year, employers find themselves dealing with increased healthcare costs and decreased productivity, while employees are forced to either take sick days or bring their illness into the workplace. One unfortunate consequence of the latter is the unavoidable spread of disease among coworkers. This can be risky for people who are elderly or immunocompromised, as viral infections can cause or worsen a variety of health issues. It is important to slow virus transmission in the workplace to prevent employee absenteeism as well as lasting health problems.

### Hygiene Tips:

1. Wash hands before touching your face or after touching a shared surface.
2. Disinfect all surfaces, including community and personal.
3. Always cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands.

In this study, researchers planned to study how disinfecting communal surfaces and enforcing hand hygiene behaviors helped to slow viral spread. Their results show that even when a single person or high-touch surface is contaminated, viruses can move rapidly around an office space; after 6 hours of activity, all surfaces tested positive for the tracer. Disinfecting surfaces with Purell Professional Surface Disinfectant alongside personal hand sanitization daily is the most effective method for preventing virus spread. Several surfaces showed a significantly higher concentration of viral tracer than others, so they should be disinfected more routinely. These surfaces were:

- The refrigerator in the break room
- The exit door push bar, the soap dispensers in the women’s restroom
- The sink faucet handle in the break room
- The drawer handles in the break room.

These results reveal that shared spaces are often more contaminated than personal spaces, and that one should take extra care to clean these areas especially well.

Good hygiene practice will slow the spread of a virus. As this study showed, virus transmission was reduced simply by wiping down surfaces and disinfecting hands. By implementing a strategy for routine sanitization of high-contact surfaces, both personal and shared, employers should see a noteworthy decrease in disease spread throughout their offices. Hygiene practices like these can be applied outside of the workplace as well, in the hopes of slowing the spread of risky, contagious viruses.

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