

Clean hands and keyboards cut health risks

May 14 2012



(Medical Xpress) -- Using simple ethanol-based hand sanitisers and regular cleaning with ethanol wipes can dramatically reduce bacteria on shared computer keyboards.

A study conducted by researchers from Swinburne University of Technology's Environment and Biotechnology Centre has proven that these simple measures led to a to a reduced potential health risk.

The study is a follow-up to an earlier study investigating the number and type of microorganisms on the keyboards of computers at multiple-user facilities at Swinburne's Hawthorn campus.

The keyboard and mouse of ten computers in a shared lab were selected at random and sampled every Friday over five weeks. At first all were found to be contaminated with both coliforms, a commonly used bacterial indicator of sanitary quality of foods and water, and

staphylococci, a common cause of food poisoning.

After two weeks, a commercial ethanol-based [hand sanitizer](#) was introduced into the lab and users were asked to sanitise their hands before using a computer terminal. Half of the computers were also cleaned using commercial antibacterial wipes.

Over the next two weeks no coliforms were detected on the computers, indicating that hand sanitation alone was effective.

Staphylococci were not totally eliminated from the computers, but their levels were reduced.

"High use, multiple user [internet cafes](#) and computer labs are potential hot spots for harbouring [microorganisms](#) and spreading disease" said Associate Professor Enzo Palombo, one of the study's authors.

"Organizations should be more rigorous in keeping shared equipment clean.

"Our recommendation is that hand sanitisers be made available and users be encouraged to clean their hands before and after using shared computers."

More information: The study has been published in the latest issue of the *American Journal of Infection Control*.

Provided by Swinburne University of Technology

Citation: Clean hands and keyboards cut health risks (2012, May 14) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-05-keyboards-health.html>

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