

Blowing out the candles on your birthday cake? You may wish you hadn't.

August 3 2017, by Don Sweeney, The Sacramento Bee



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Turns out germophobes may be right about the whole "blowing out the candles" thing.

A recent study in the *Journal of Food Research* found that blowing out the candles produces 1,400 percent more [bacteria](#) in cake icing than in icing not blown on.

The report, titled *Bacterial Transfer Associated with Blowing Out Candles on a Birthday Cake*, found that more than 2,000 "moisture particles" are exhaled when blowing out candles, each particle large enough to carry bacteria and viruses. Some the bacteria identified in the study include staphylococcus, corynebacterium, haemophilus and neisseria.

Instead of baking real cakes, researchers at Clemson University spread [cake](#) frosting on Styrafoam wrapped in aluminum foil, then blew out the candles on some and not on others in order to compare bacterial counts. Before blowing out the candles, researchers ate pizza to get in a party mood.

"We also wanted to simulate a birthday party," study co-author Paul Dawson told *The Atlantic*. "We thought it might help the salivary glands get going."

But Dawson told *The Atlantic* he's personally not too bothered by the findings.

"It's not a big health concern in my perspective," he said. "In reality if you did this 100,000 times, then the chance of getting sick would probably be very minimal."

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Citation: Blowing out the candles on your birthday cake? You may wish you hadn't. (2017, August 3) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-08-candles->

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