



HEALTH AWARENESS

Is Your Office Making You Sick?

(NAPSA)—Telltale signs that cold and flu season has arrived to your office: Empty facial tissue boxes cover desks. Sneezing, coughing and much sniffing can be heard up and down the halls. Your co-workers look as if they are dragging themselves from meeting to meeting. Get the picture?

Staying well is nothing to sneeze at, especially when everyone around you is coughing and hacking. It doesn't help that cold- and flu-causing viruses can live on surfaces for as long as three days, says University of Arizona microbiologist Dr. Charles Gerba, who was curious about how long it would take for cold and flu germs to make their way around an office. The answer? Not long.

"During cold and flu season, an office really can be like an incubator," said Dr. Gerba. "Germs can move about the office faster than water-cooler gossip."

Dr. Gerba said his testing showed that cold and flu viruses not only thrive on staplers, door-knobs and phones, they easily can become germ transfer stations. A person infected with a cold or flu can leave enough virus behind to potentially infect the next person who touches the same stapler, doorknob or phone. In an average day, one person touches an average of 300 surfaces within 30 minutes.

"There's a reason it's called the common cold," said Dr. Gerba.

Studying office environments is nothing new for Dr. Gerba, who last year undertook a major study for The Clorox Company of the way bacteria piles up in offices. The study—the first of its kind to measure normal bacterial levels inside offices across America—found that the average desk harbors 20,961 germs per square inch. That's 400 times more bacteria than the average toilet seat.

"Desks are really bacteria cafeterias," said Dr. Gerba. "They're



Illness-causing viruses can survive on staplers and other office surfaces for days—allowing colds and flu to thrive in office environments.

breakfast bars, lunch tables and everything else, as we spend more and more hours at the office."

Gerba and his researchers found that unless desks and other surfaces were wiped clean with a disinfectant during the day, bacteria levels climbed higher and higher, peaking after lunch.

"One good way to beat bacteria and help stop the spread of germs is to regularly clean your personal workspace," said Dr. Gerba. "During our studies, we found that using disinfecting wipes can dramatically reduce the germ-load and therefore help reduce your chances of illness."

Clorox Disinfecting Wipes make it easy to clean and disinfect in one easy step. Safe to use on most hard, non-porous surfaces, Clorox Disinfecting Wipes are pre-moistened and ready to use—follow directions for disinfecting and just wipe, toss and be done. They kill 99.9 percent of viruses that cause cold and flu, as well as bacteria commonly found in kitchens and bathrooms.

For more information, about disinfecting, log onto www.cloroxdisinfectingwipes.com.