

Back To School = Back To Germs?

Study Finds Schools Can Cut Risk of Illness by Implementing Hygiene Programs

ROSWELL, Ga., Oct. 2, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- With cold and flu season about to begin, students may have more to contend with than just homework.

(Photo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20121002/NE79663-INFO-a>)

(Photo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20121002/NE79663-b>)

Schools can be breeding grounds for germs that can lead to illness and significant absenteeism: 189 million school days lost to the common cold and nearly 38 million to influenza each year.^{i,ii} However, data from a new study shows that students who practice proper hand and surface hygiene in the classroom can effectively reduce the risk of germ transmission.

The study, conducted by Kimberly-Clark Professional, tested surface contamination on some of the most frequently touched objects in six elementary schools. Hygienists first performed Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP) testing to determine baseline contamination levels. Participating schools then implemented *Super Germ Fighters*, a customized educational program for kindergarten through fifth grade, and The Healthy Classroom Station, which provides kid-friendly products – like hand sanitizers, alcohol and bleach-free surface wipes, and anti-viral facial tissue – to teach students how to "wash, wipe and sanitize" to help reduce the spread of germs.

Changing Behaviors

The study found that, when students were provided with the tools and knowledge necessary to break the chain of germ transmission in the classroom, contamination levels were significantly reduced throughout the entire school. After the program had been in place for seven months, contamination levels were reduced on average by the following amounts:

- 76 percent on bathroom stall door locks
- 71 percent on desks
- 53 percent on door handles
- 45 percent on cafeteria tables
- 41 percent on computer mice
- 34 percent on water fountain buttons

One of the most significant reductions in contamination was on classroom desks – surfaces that the students were personally responsible for wiping down on a daily basis. In some cases, ATP levels fell from as high as 838 to as low as 243. An ATP reading of 300 or more is considered to pose a high risk for illness transmission.

"The study results demonstrate that providing young students with age-appropriate educational materials and products designed to instill good hygiene habits can have a profound effect on behaviors, which in turn can reduce germs inside and outside the classroom," said Richard Marriott, Education Target Market Leader, Kimberly-Clark Professional. "These results are even more significant when you consider the impact that illnesses can have on students, parents and teachers."

Also notable was the drop in contamination levels outside the classroom, especially on the bathroom stall door locks. While the children were only exposed to the products and the germ reduction curriculum inside the

classroom, in one school, the locks' ATP levels, which began at a high of 974, dropped to 230, demonstrating that the students made a conscious effort to change their hand hygiene habits in areas outside of their classrooms as well.

"Teachers and parents everywhere are well aware of the issue of germs in our schools," said Robert Starner, Principal, Bridgeway Christian Academy, Alpharetta, Ga. "These study results are impressive. The combination of the interactive lesson plans provided in the *Super Germ Fighters* program, along with effective germ-fighting products, have helped us keep our students healthier and our classrooms more productive."

Study Methodology

Using a Hygiena SystemSURE II™ ATP Meter, a device commonly used to monitor sanitary conditions in industry, hygienists swabbed the objects to measure levels of Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP). ATP is present in all animal, vegetable, bacteria, yeast and mold cells. Detection of ATP indicates the presence of contamination by any of these sources. Everyday objects with an ATP reading of 300 or higher are considered to have a high risk for illness transmission. Objects with an ATP reading between 100 and 300 suggest room for improvement in the cleanliness level. Six Southeastern K-5 schools participated in the study, including four public and two private schools. Over a seven month period, the hygienists collected nearly 7,500 individual swabs at two week intervals from the participating schools, which included a total of 3,700 students, 500 teachers and staff, and 300 classrooms.

About The Healthy Schools Project

The study was conducted on behalf of The Healthy Schools Project, a new program from Kimberly-Clark Professional that offers a simple-to-implement curriculum with unique materials and product solutions designed for all education levels – with age-appropriate materials for kindergarten to college students. *Super Germ Fighters*, the interactive K-5 program initiated at each study site, empowers children to fight germs in their classrooms by delivering a hands-on experience using kid-friendly products such as Kleenex Moisturizing Foam Hand Sanitizer, Kleenex Anti-Viral Facial Tissue, and alcohol and bleach-free Scott Surface Wipes, along with posters, clings and stickers to reinforce the importance of good hand and surface hygiene habits.

About Kimberly-Clark Professional

Kimberly-Clark Professional partners with businesses to create Exceptional Workplaces for their employees and patrons. Kimberly-Clark Professional helps transform workplaces, making them healthier, safer and more productive. Key brands in this segment include: Kleenex, Scott, WypAll, Kimtech, and Jackson Safety. Kimberly-Clark Professional, located in Roswell, Ga., is one of Kimberly-Clark Corporation's four business segments and can be visited on the web at www.kcprofessional.com.

[i] Roxas M, Jurenka J. Colds and influenza: a review of diagnosis and conventional, botanical, and nutritional considerations. *Altern Med Rev*. Mar 12 2007; 1:25-48

[ii] Adams PF, Hendershot GE, and Marano MA. Current estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, 1996. National Center for Health Statistics. *Vital Health Stat* 10(200). 1999.

SOURCE Kimberly-Clark Professional

For further information: Rachel Gross, Schwartz MSL, +1-781-684-0770, kcphsp@schwartzmsl.com; or Kara Herron, Kimberly-Clark Professional, +1-770-587-8049, kara.herron@kcc.com