

## Closing toilet-seat lids may not stop spread of germs

29th January 2024



Many people believe that putting the toilet-seat lid down helps to prevent the spread of dangerous germs and viruses. A recent study pretty much dispels this supposition. A team of microbiologists from the University of Arizona conducted research on the aerial

activity of viral particles after a toilet is flushed. The scientists determined that there is little difference in the spread of germs, regardless of whether the lid is up or down. Microbiologist Dr Charles Gerba has been studying lavatory pathogens for nearly five decades. He said: "All that air when you flush goes somewhere, and it carries the viruses that are in the toilet bowl out of it." He said a flush forces bacteria out from under the lid and contaminates nearby areas.

The researchers tested the spread of a test virus in two bathrooms after a flush. The virus was one not able to infect humans. They flushed one bowl with the lid up, and another with the lid down. After a minute, they used a sponge to swab the surfaces in the toilet. They concluded that there were no significant statistical differences in the quantities of the virus in the two bathrooms. They added that the results "demonstrate that closing the toilet lid prior to flushing does not mitigate the risk of contaminating bathroom surfaces, and that disinfection of all restroom surfaces may be necessary after flushing or after toilet-brush use" to cut the spread of germs. They also said it was important to disinfect the water in the bowl.

Sources: [usatoday.com](http://usatoday.com) / [dailymail.co.uk](http://dailymail.co.uk) / [forbes.com](http://forbes.com)

## Writing

Toilet seats are cleaner than computer keyboards. Discuss.

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

toilet seat / germs / study / microbiologists / toilet / five decades / flush / bacteria / test / humans / sponge / swab / differences / bathroom surfaces / water / brush

## True / False

- 1) A study proved that putting the toilet lid down helps to kill germs. T / F
- 2) Microbiologists studied the aerial spread of germs from toilets. T / F
- 3) Dr Charles Gerba has studied pathogens for nearly half a century. T / F
- 4) A microbiologist said flushing a toilet keeps germs in the toilet bowl. T / F
- 5) Researchers studied the spread of germs in a dozen toilets. T / F
- 6) The researchers found sponges were covered in germs. T / F
- 7) The researchers suggested disinfecting the surfaces in toilets. T / F
- 8) The researchers said there was no need to disinfect water in the bowl. T / F

## Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                        |                |
|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. <b>supposition</b>  | a. carried out |
| 2. <b>conducted</b>    | b. reduce      |
| 3. <b>determined</b>   | c. infects     |
| 4. <b>forces</b>       | d. major       |
| 5. <b>contaminates</b> | e. show        |
| 6. <b>surfaces</b>     | f. discovered  |
| 7. <b>significant</b>  | g. utilization |
| 8. <b>demonstrate</b>  | h. drives      |
| 9. <b>mitigate</b>     | i. belief      |
| 10. <b>use</b>         | j. tops        |

## Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) Should we hold our breath when we flush the toilet?
- c) What do you think of toilets in fast food restaurants?
- d) Are toilet seats cleaner than computer keyboards?
- e) How hygienic are door handles, escalator handrails and elevator buttons?
- f) What's the worst toilet you've ever been in?
- g) What do you think of the toilet in your house?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

## Phrase Match

- |                                       |                          |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. A recent study pretty much dispels | a. areas                 |
| 2. the aerial activity of             | b. the lid is up or down |
| 3. regardless of whether              | c. differences           |
| 4. a flush forces bacteria out        | d. able to infect humans |
| 5. contaminates nearby                | e. this supposition      |
| 6. The virus was one not              | f. water in the bowl     |
| 7. they used a sponge to              | g. the risk              |
| 8. significant statistical            | h. from under the lid    |
| 9. flushing does not mitigate         | i. swab the surfaces     |
| 10. disinfect the                     | j. viral particles       |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of toilet lids?
- What worries do you have about toilet seats?
- What do you think of public toilets?
- How germ-free is the toilet seat in your house?
- What do you do to avoid 'stuff' in public toilets?
- What do you think of putting fluffy covers on toilet seats?
- What do you think of bidets?
- Has reading this article changed your view of toilet seats?

## Spelling

- pretty much dispels this pspunoisoti
- A team of omigcotbiirsols
- research on the arliea activity
- viral pateclsir
- studying lavatory tpnohsage for nearly five decades
- taiaonsnmetc nearby areas
- The virus was one not able to cetnfi humans
- they used a sponge to awbs
- significant tstiaastlci differences
- flushing does not tmiegtai the risk
- all restroom cafruess
- fdcestini the water

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. i	2. a	3. f	4. h	5. c
6. j	7. d	8. e	9. b	10. g

## Role Play

### Role A – Train Stations

You think train stations have the best toilets. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their places. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these places (and why): parks, schools or convenience stores.

### Role B – Parks

You think parks have the best toilets. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their places. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these places (and why): train stations, schools or convenience stores.

### Role C – Schools

You think schools have the best toilets. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their places. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these places (and why): parks, train stations or convenience stores.

### Role D – Convenience Stores

You think convenience stores have the best toilets. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their places. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these places (and why): parks, schools or train stations.

## Speaking – Toilets

Rank these with your partner. Put the places with the best toilets at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| • Train stations     | • Hospitals |
| • Convenience stores | • Schools   |
| • McDonald's         | • Hotels    |
| • Parks              | • Streets   |

### Answers – True False

1	F	2	T	3	T	4	F	5	F	6	F	7	T	8	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.