

Employee Safety

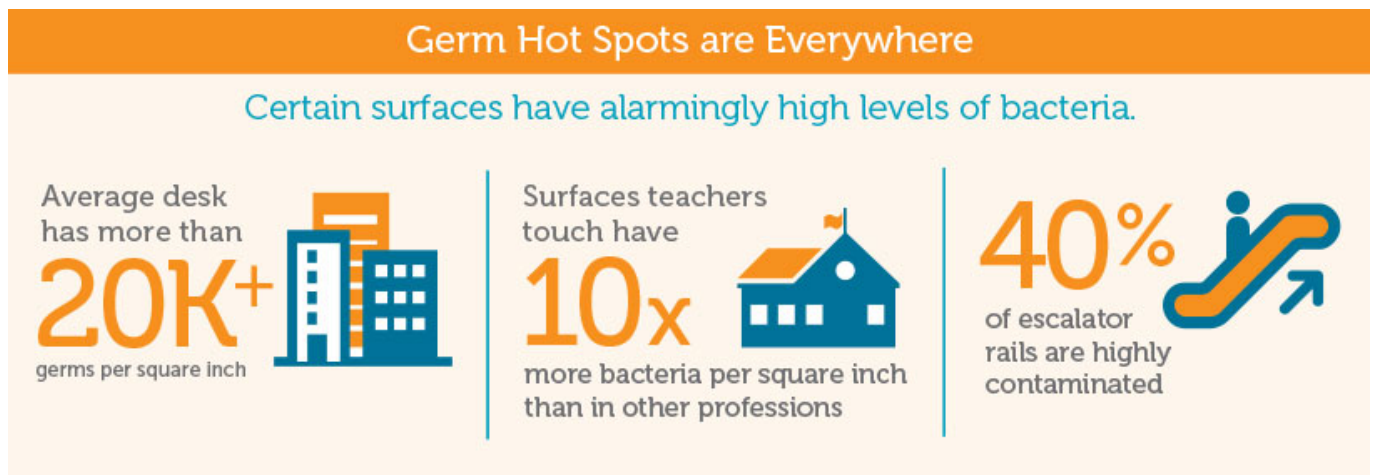
## Hygiene: The Missing Link to Wellness

Kimberly-Clark Professional | Jun 16, 2017

There is a troubling blind spot in the worksite wellness arena and it is costing employers an opportunity to make inroads in the effort to improve employee well-being, increase productivity and reduce healthcare costs. The missing link is a hygiene-based approach to wellness that can help generate immediate results.

Nearly everyone is going to catch a cold, flu or stomach bug in any given year - illnesses that easily can cause absences. On average, people with the flu will need three to five days off work.<sup>i</sup> which can have a significant cumulative impact of lost productivity. The flu causes U.S. workers to lose up to 111 million workdays at an estimated \$7 billion a year in sick days and lost productivity.<sup>ii</sup> Worse yet, if the employee comes to work sick, the common cold can impair an employee's psychomotor functioning and slow response times in various tasks<sup>iii</sup>, potentially putting themselves and others in danger.

Kimberly-Clark professional put a hygiene-based approach to wellness to the test. During pilot programs, The Healthy Workplace Project\* had an average employee participation rate of an astounding 94%, helping one location generate a 46% reduction in absenteeism. A hygiene-based approach increases participation because of its relevance to all employees. Everyone intuitively understands the importance of keeping one's hands clean to prevent the spread of germs.

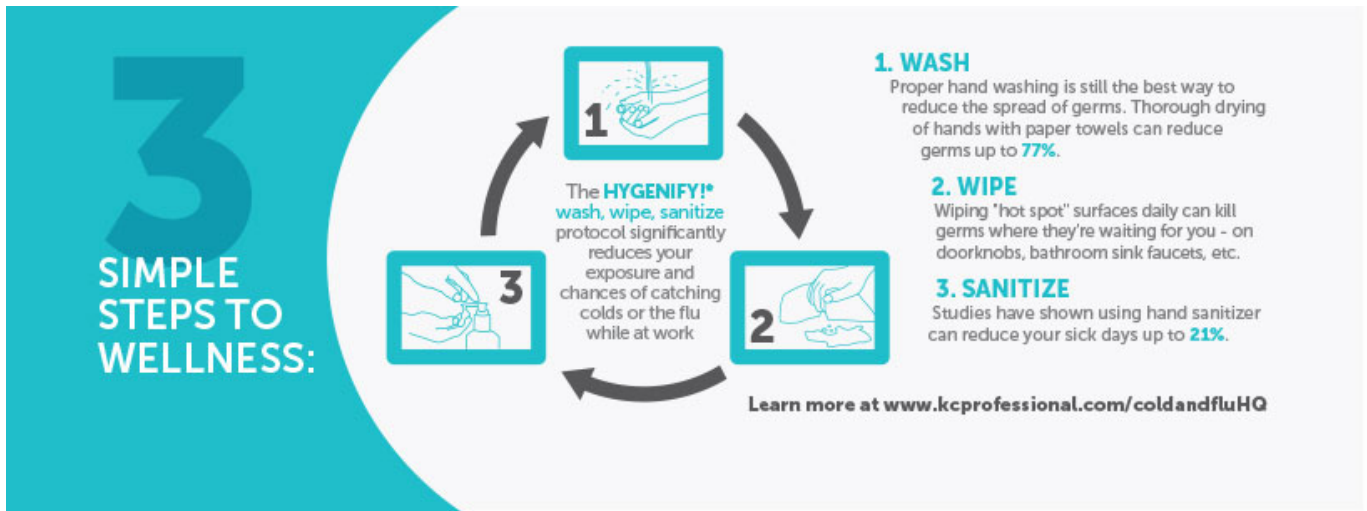


Germ Hot Spots Are Everywhere

There are four key components to a workplace hygiene program. Each one is designed to reduce unplanned employee absences as well as slow medical trend costs associated with minor illnesses.

1. Educate the workforce about high-risk communal areas and office hot spots for germs, as well as how to best reduce the three biggest threats (cold, flu and stomach illness). Employee communications need to include awareness tools, signage, e-mails and supplemental information.
2. Empower employees with greater knowledge of solutions that include hand sanitizers, antibacterial soap, surface disinfectants, antiviral tissue and washroom hand towels. It's also important to explain the most high-risk areas for the spread of the minor illnesses.
3. Engage employees in healthy habits (washing, wiping and sanitizing hands). Such efforts could include a kickoff party or team competitions that feature incentives and product giveaways to

help generate interest in the program.



### 3 Simple Steps To Wellness

4. Evaluate programs with the help of regularly scheduled inspections and quarterly progress reports, as well as identify hot spots for the spread of minor illnesses: keyboards, surface areas, conference rooms or break rooms.

There's no question that a hygiene-based approach to employee wellness can help round out traditional programs, which have struggled to draw enough participants to generate realistic ROI. With minor illnesses triggering major problems in terms of both employee health and benefit costs, it behooves employers to give it serious consideration.

Kimberly-Clark Professional's The HYGIENIFY\* wash, wipe, sanitize protocol can significantly reduce exposure and the chances of catching a cold or the flu in the workplace. Help to reduce cross-contamination of germs by providing Kimberly-Clark Professional\* washroom products to help keep a clean and hygienic environment.

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<sup>i.</sup> Lavelle, Peter, Got the 'flu? Take a sickie!, ABC Health & Wellbeing, May 15, 2016

<sup>ii.</sup> [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17544181](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17544181) Molinari NA, Ortega-Sanchez IR, Messonnier ML, Thompson WW, Wortley PM, Weintraub E, Bridges CB. The annual impact of seasonal influenza in the US: measuring disease burden and costs. *Vaccine* 2007;25(27):5086–5096.

<sup>iii.</sup> Smith, A. (2012) Behavioral Effects of Upper Respiratory Tract Illnesses: A Consideration of Possible Underlying Cognitive Mechanisms. *Behavioral Sciences*. Cardiff University. Centre for Occupational Environmental Medicine, 46, 398-412