

Health & Hygiene:

Healthy Workplace Tips



In this day and age of virulent flu strains, SARS, and other infectious disease outbreaks, it should be no secret that the public is concerned about cleanliness and hygiene. (The flu and the common cold were the health issues that 80 percent of people in a recent national survey said they were most concerned about.) In fact, people go to such great lengths to avoid germs that they perform like contortionists in public restrooms – flushing toilets with their feet, pushing doors open with their shoulders, dispensing towels with their elbows, and doing anything necessary to avoid germ-laden surfaces.

For office building owners and managers, this heightened germ awareness means it's more important than ever to provide sanitary and hygienic working conditions for tenants. Although most tenants won't employ the "white glove test" to check for cleanliness, don't be fooled...they ARE monitoring the condition and hygiene of their surroundings. While managing for stringent cleanliness and

hygiene may seem like an unrecoverable overhead expense, consider building cleanliness as a marketing advantage. What can you do to establish a unique selling proposition that comes from having a truly clean and hygienic building?

In The Restroom

Nothing says "unhygienic" more than a dirty restroom. Unfortunately, office building restrooms don't rate high on the public restroom cleanliness scale, according to a survey in which only 18 percent of people polled chose office building restrooms as the most clean and hygienic (compared to 42 percent who chose public restrooms in hotels). A separate survey supports this: whether it's from paper litter on the floor, noxious odors, or lackadaisical cleaning, dirty restrooms topped the list of building tenant complaints.

& Health Hygiene

A couple of quick tips to keep germs at bay in your facility...

- **Identify “hot zones” for germ transmission.** The toilet, the floor surrounding the toilet, the sink and counter, and high-touch objects such as handles and levers (found everywhere from water faucets and paper towel dispensers to the door you open on the way out of the restroom) can all harbor germs just waiting for the next pair of clean and unsuspecting hands to pick them up. *Tip: According to one of the seminal studies on microorganisms in public restrooms, the hot water tap may be more likely to harbor germs than even the toilet seat!*
- **Stop germ transmission in its tracks by employing no-touch systems.** No-touch technology can be employed in toilet flushers, water faucets, and dispensers for toilet paper, soap and hand towels. No-touch technology is especially crucial for hand towel dispensers, since towels are typically used once hands are clean, after having been washed and rinsed. That is the most important time for tenants not to touch potentially germ-laden surfaces. *Tip: Look for towel and tissue dispensing systems with “interleaved” paper, so users only need to touch the towel or toilet paper they use without fishing around inside the dispenser, thus reducing the risks of contamination. Or look for completely “touchless” roll towel dispensers that don’t have levers or cranks.*
- **Encourage proper handwashing.** According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), handwashing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Educate tenants on the importance of proper handwashing. Post reminders in restrooms. *Tip: Make sure there’s always plenty of mild hand soap and soft, absorbent hand towels in every restroom. Nothing is more disconcerting to people who want to “do the right thing” by washing up, only to find no handwashing supplies. If supply run-out is a problem, consider a high-capacity dispenser and remember – high-capacity doesn’t need to mean industrial. Find a high-volume dispenser that lends a little class to your restrooms.*

Around The Office

Although 39 percent of office workers polled in a recent survey said they want their management to establish a policy requiring employees with contagious infections or diseases to stay home from work until they’re better, the fact is that people do come to work when they’re sick. However, there are some easy things that building owners and managers can do to help stem the spread of infections....

- **Identify “hot zones” for germ transmission.** Just as in restrooms, germs can be spread any time someone touches something that has been touched by someone else. Desks, phones, elevator buttons, and door handles are just some of the commonly touched surfaces that can serve as a link in the transmission of germs. Proper surface sanitation and hand hygiene are crucial elements in the fight against germ transmission. *Tip: Choose a surface sanitizing system that’s portable and easy to carry for spot-cleaning activities, particularly important during peak cold and flu times. And to help tenants keep their hands sanitized and free from germs, provide alcohol gel hand sanitizers, which can be found in a variety of pump or wall-mounted dispensers for use throughout the building, especially in high-traffic areas.*
- **Don’t forget the break room.** This can be an ideal spot for the spread of germs, including foodborne illness germs. Giving tenants hand- and surface-sanitizing products can help avoid problems with cross-contamination. *Tip: Provide canisters of disposable surface sanitizer wipes for tenants to wipe down food contact surfaces. If the break room doesn’t have a sink, install alcohol gel hand sanitizers. If it does have a sink, post hand-washing reminders so tenants wash up before they eat.*
- **Consider the issue of “respiratory etiquette.”** Originally developed by the CDC as a way to reduce the spread of SARS in health care facilities, the practice of respiratory etiquette

includes some common-sense measures anyone can apply to help lessen the severity of colds, the flu and other infections that can be spread via respiratory droplets or hand contact.

Ideas include:

- Instructing people with symptoms of a respiratory infection to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Making hand hygiene products and tissues available.
- Providing designated containers for disposal of used tissues. *Tip: During the height of cold and flu season, create a "tenant care package" with lotionized facial tissue, for extra comfort against sore, runny noses and portable hand sanitizer gels, for on-the-spot de-germing.*

For more tips on creating and maintaining a clean, hygienic building, visit www.kcprofessional.com.