- House cleaning

Clean These Kitchen Hot Spots Fast

These tips will keep the hub of your home—and your family—as healthy as possible

BY ARRICCA ELIN SANSONE

Think your kitchen—aka the busiest room in the house—is spotless? Not so fast. "Moisture and food make it the perfect environment for germs to grow," says Kelly A. Reynolds, Ph.D., an environmental microbiologist at the University of Arizona. This checklist can help you stop germs from spreading in the dirtiest kitchen nooks.

1. KITCHEN SINK

"Millions of bacteria cling to the sink, drain seal and garbage disposal gasket," warns Dr. Reynolds. **Keep It Clean:** After rinsing raw meat, veggies or pet bowls—and at least once a day—spray disinfectant on the faucet, sink and strainer. Be sure to leave the product on for the recommended contact time.

2. DISH RAGS, SPONGES AND BRUSHES

More than 75% of these harbor bacteria, per the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF). "They're breeding grounds for germs," says Ashley Drews, M.D., an infectious disease specialist at Houston Methodist Hospital. **Keep Them Clean:** Swap rags daily, wash in hot water and dry on high heat. Sanitize sponges in the microwave for a minute. Spray brushes with disinfectant daily or toss in the dishwasher.

3. COFFEE MAKER

Coffee isn't the only thing brewing—yeast and mold were found in nearly half of coffeepot reservoirs surveyed by the NSF. These can trigger allergies and ruin your brew. **Keep It Clean:** Once a month, fill the reservoir with vinegar, let it sit for 30 minutes, then run a coffee maker cycle. Follow up with several water cycles, and be sure to wash removable parts between uses.

4. HANDLES, KNOBS AND SWITCHES

"They don't always look dirty," says Liz Trotter of American Maid Cleaning, "but if you touch it multiple times a day, it's covered in germs." **Keep Them Clean:** Disinfect refrigerator handles, stove knobs, cabinet pulls and light switches at least once a month and immediately after handling raw meat and produce.

5. GARBAGE CAN

No matter how careful you are, food particles and meat juices build up. "If your garbage smells, that's bacteria or mold multiplying," says Dr. Reynolds. Touching the lid and then another surface spreads the germs. **Keep It Clean:** Once a week, take your garbage can outside, spray it inside and out with disinfectant, let it sit, then rinse and let it air-dry.



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