

The bacteria time bomb in your home

Most of us never give a second thought to how long we've had that chopping board, or that hairbrush or those pillows. But while they may all look clean and serviceable enough, these seemingly innocent household items can actually harbour potentially harmful bacteria if used too long, regardless of how often they're cleaned. So with that in mind let's look at how often you should consider spring cleaning those everyday household items – and when it's time to throw them in the bin. *Wooden spoons* should be replaced every five years. They are more porous than plastic or metal ones making them more susceptible to germs and bacteria. A nasty kitchen bacteria is *E. coli* that's usually picked up from raw meat or children with poor cleaning habits! *Toothbrushes* should be replaced every three months otherwise this could lead to heart disease, a stroke or arthritis. An average toothbrush contains 10m germs! *Bath towels* can be used indefinitely if washed at high temperatures without damage otherwise bacteria from your skin can be transferred to your towel and if you have a wound could lead to infection.

Pillows and duvets – pillows should be replaced every two years, duvets every five years. Dust mites are nasty little unwelcome guests that live in your pillow and duvets. A brand new pillow doubles its weight in three years thanks to those dust mites inside it! This could aggravate hay fever, eczema or asthma. Duvets should be washed every six months, pillows every three months. *Hairbrushes* should be replaced every four years – but sooner if the bristles get damaged as these can scratch the scalp, causing potential infections to spread. One hair follicle can hold 50,000 germs. Hairbrushes can collect residues of hair products which can become sticky and collect dirt. Sharing a brush is not recommended as skin diseases could be passed on to another person. *Plastic chopping boards* should be replaced every three years. The average chopping board is home to 50 times more bacteria than a toilet seat! While loo seats are cleaned chopping boards are not! They need spraying with a disinfectant, scrubbed then boiling water should be poured over the board. Bacteria can lurk in the grooves that develop from deep marks cut into it from knife cuts.

Category: Living / Bacteria / Household bugs

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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The bacteria time bomb in your home – 30th January 2011

Mattresses should be replaced every five years though if you vacuum them every week it can be up to ten years. We excrete 1/4 litre of moisture every night, not to mention all the skin scales we shed that provides a constant source of food for dust mites. The average bed contains 10,000 house dust mites (resulting in 2m droppings!). Mattresses should be kept clean by stripping and vacuuming it at least once a week. *Trainers* should be replaced once a year or every one thousand six hundred kilometres. Watch out for mould and fungal infections that can flourish in trainers. They should be washed once a month with cold, soapy water and left out to dry naturally. *Loo brushes* should be replaced between six months and one year. They are not the most pleasant of items! Frayed bristles can cause splashing and send dirty toilet water on to walls spreading bacteria.

Kitchen sponges/cloths – replace every month or use disposable kitchen towels instead. These are ideal breeding grounds for bacteria. Germs can be spread round as the sponges/cloths are moved from surface to surface. Different cloths should be used for different jobs. Sponges should be squeezed out and dipped in disinfectant and rinsed in hot water so you can't put your hand in. *Tea towels* can also spread bacteria but they can last forever providing they are washed each time at 90°C. *Nail files/Emery boards* – replace after every three uses. They are difficult to clean and can accumulate dirt in crevices. If then used on a split or lifted up nail this could cause a localised infection. Also if more than one person used an emery board, infection can spread from person to person.

Other places that harbour nasty germs include: *Vacuum cleaners* – traces of dirt can survive five days inside the vacuum after you empty the dirt. They should be sprayed with a disinfectant after every use. Attachments should be cleaned at least once a week by washing them in hot water. *Airing cupboards* – germs can thrive in warm environments such as this. So wipe the surfaces inside your airing cupboard at least once a week with a clean cloth. *Water tanks* need to be kept clean to prevent sludging, sediment and scale – all of which provide favourable conditions in which bacteria can grow. Tanks should be cleaned at least once a year. A more in depth clean should be done every few years. *Soap dispensers* are full of germs from dirty, germey hands that touch the soap dispenser in your bathroom or kitchen – spreading cold and flu bugs as well as facial bacteria. The tops of soap dispensers should also be washed at least once a week.

So with all this in mind you might have some spring cleaning to do!

EXERCISES

1. **Bacteria:** Think of three places in the home you might find bacteria.

2. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. **Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. **Vocabulary:** Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. **The article:** Students should look through the article with the teacher.
 - a) What is the article about?
 - b) What do you think about the article?

6. **Bacteria in the home!** Think of five household items that might pick up bacteria. List them below. Then add five rooms in the home you might find them. Explain to your partner why you chose these. What does this tell you?

Five household items that might pick up bacteria	Five rooms in the home that might pick up bacteria
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

7. **Quick debate:** In pairs. Students A thinks keeping surfaces clean is important. Students B think otherwise and that the cleaning can wait a bit. Explain!

8. **Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with the '**Bacteria in the home**'. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

The bacteria time bomb in your home – 30th January 2011

9. Cleaning materials: Think of five cleaning products you use in the home. Then add five devices that help you clean your home. Compare and discuss with your partner. What does this tell you?

Cleaning products	Devices
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

10. Let's talk! Radio Dyson: *In pairs/groups.* You are in the Radio Dyson studio in Malaysia. The station broadcasts to its workforce! One of you is the presenter; the other student(s) is/are one the people listed below. Today's interview is about bacteria in the home. Try to get a balanced interview. *5 minutes.*

1	James Dyson – the founder	3	A germ!
2	Yourself	4	A dirty surface

The teacher will choose some pairs to tell their stories in front of the class.

11. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) What are found in pillows and duvets?
- 2) How often should hairbrushes be replaced? Why?
- 3) Do bath towels need replacing?
- 4) Why do toothbrushes need replacing?
- 5) How often should plastic chopping boards be replaced? Why?

Student B

- 1) How much moisture do we excrete every night?
- 2) What's another name for a nail file?
- 3) How often should kitchen sponges be replaced? Why?
- 4) How many dust mites are in an average bed?
- 5) Soap dispensers are dirty from what?

12. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **Bacteria in my home.** Your e-mail can be read out in class.

13. Let's tell a story: Cleaning my home: In pairs/class: Prepare a short story about cleaning the bacteria in your home.

The teacher can choose one pair to tell their version of the story in front of the class.

14. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Cleaning _____
- b) Bacteria _____
- c) Germs _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) How often do you clean your home? Why?
- 3) Do you have an airing cupboard? Do you use it? Why?
- 4) How often do you look at your water tank? Why?
- 5) What type of vacuum cleaner do you have? Why?
- 6) How often do you vacuum your home? Why?
- 7) Do you have a cleaning lady/person? Why?
- 8) Would you consider having a cleaning lady/person? Why?
- 9) How often do you use a toilet brush? Why?
- 10) Do you use a nail file/emery board? Why?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) How old is your mattress?
- 3) How often you do vacuum your mattress? Why?
- 4) Do you use a soap dispenser? Why?
- 5) How old are your trainers? Do you wear them a lot?
- 6) When did you last wash your trainers? Why?
- 7) When did you last change your toothbrush? Why?
- 8) How old is your pillow and how often do you wash it?
- 9) How old is your duvet and when did you last wash it?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

A new cleaning product for your home

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

You work for a big company who is organising a new cleaning product for killing bacteria and germs. With your colleague(s) prepare some ideas for it. Think how you can launch and promote your new product. Present your ideas to the class. Which presentation is best? Why?

Consider the following:-

Name of new cleaning product	Who is it aimed at?
Promotion idea	Marketing tools
What it cleans?	Press coverage
Slogan	Why is it needed?
Other ideas you have for it	

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The bacteria time bomb in your home

Most of us never give a second thought to how long we've had that chopping board, or that (1)_____ or those pillows. But while they may all look clean and serviceable enough, these seemingly innocent household items can actually harbour potentially (2)_____ bacteria if used too long, regardless of how often they're cleaned. So with that in mind let's look at how often you should (3)_____ spring cleaning those everyday household items – and when it's time to throw them in the bin. *Wooden spoons* should be replaced every five years. They are more (4)_____ than plastic or metal ones making them more susceptible to germs and (5)_____. A (6)_____ kitchen bacteria is *E. coli* that's usually picked up from raw meat or children with poor cleaning habits! *Toothbrushes* should be replaced every three months otherwise this could lead to heart disease, a stroke or arthritis. An average toothbrush contains 10m germs! *Bath* (7)_____ can be used indefinitely if washed at high temperatures without damage otherwise bacteria from your skin can be transferred to your towel and if you have a wound could lead to (8)_____.

towels

harmful

infection

nasty

porous

consider

bacteria

hairbrush

Pillows and duvets – pillows should be replaced every two years, duvets every five years. Dust (1)_____ are nasty little unwelcome guests that live in your (2)_____ and duvets. A brand new pillow doubles its weight in three years thanks to those (3)_____ mites inside it! This could (4)_____ hay fever, eczema or asthma. (5)_____ should be washed every six months, pillows every three months. *Hairbrushes* should be replaced every four years – but sooner if the bristles get damaged as these can scratch the (6)_____, causing potential infections to spread. One hair follicle can hold 50,000 germs. Hairbrushes can collect residues of hair products which can become (7)_____ and collect dirt. Sharing a brush is not recommended as skin diseases could be passed on to another person. *Plastic chopping boards* should be replaced every three years. The average chopping board is home to 50 times more bacteria than a (8)_____ seat!

mites

pillow

aggravate

dust

scalp

toilet

sticky

duvets

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The bacteria time bomb in your home

(1)___ of us never give a second thought to how long we've had that chopping board, or (2)___ hairbrush or those pillows. But while they may all look clean and serviceable enough, these seemingly innocent household items can actually harbour potentially harmful bacteria if used too long, regardless of how often they're cleaned. So with that in mind let's look at how often you should consider spring cleaning (3)___ everyday household items – and (4)___ it's time to throw (5)___ in the bin. *Wooden spoons* (6)___ be replaced every five years. They are more porous than plastic or metal ones making them more susceptible to germs and bacteria. A nasty kitchen bacteria is *E. coli* that's usually picked up from raw meat or children with poor cleaning habits! *Toothbrushes* should be replaced every three months otherwise this could lead to heart disease, a stroke or arthritis. An average toothbrush contains 10m germs! *Bath towels* can be used indefinitely if washed at high temperatures without damage otherwise bacteria from (7)___ skin can be transferred to your towel and if you have a wound (8)___ lead to infection.

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	bacteria	11	serviceable
2	potentially	12	innocent
3	transferred	13	unwelcome
4	aggravate	14	susceptible
5	disinfectant	15	bristles
6	porous	16	knife
7	arthritis	17	otherwise
8	mattresses	18	indefinitely
9	moisture	19	toothbrushes
10	vacuuming	20	actually

LINKS

<http://news.drugs-expert.com/allergy-news/the-bacteria-timebomb-in-your-home-the-experts-rules-for-beating-household-bugs-that-can-trigger-heart-disease-allergies-and-strokes/>

<http://www.nation.co.ke/Features/DN2/The%20bacteria%20time%20bomb%20in%20your%20home%20/-/957860/1078786/-/hr5frl/-/index.html>

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: The bacteria time bomb in your home: Most of us never give a second thought to how long we've had that chopping board, or that **hairbrush** or those pillows. But while they may all look clean and serviceable enough, these seemingly innocent household items can actually harbour potentially **harmful** bacteria if used too long, regardless of how often they're cleaned. So with that in mind let's look at how often you should **consider** spring cleaning those everyday household items – and when it's time to throw them in the bin. *Wooden spoons* should be replaced every five years. They are more **porous** than plastic or metal ones making them more susceptible to germs and **bacteria**. A **nasty** kitchen bacteria is E. coli that's usually picked up from raw meat or children with poor cleaning habits! *Toothbrushes* should be replaced every three months otherwise this could lead to heart disease, a stroke or arthritis. An average toothbrush contains 10m germs! *Bath towels* can be used indefinitely if washed at high temperatures without damage otherwise bacteria from your skin can be transferred to your towel and if you have a wound could lead to **infection**.

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