

Advanced Level

PC keyboards dirtier than toilet seats



A British computer magazine has discovered our computer keyboards could be bad for our health. “Which? Computing” asked a laboratory to check 30 keyboards in its London office for bacteria. The results were shocking, and disgusting. The lab scientists said five of the keyboards they tested put people at risk of illness. One keyboard contained 150 times more bacteria than health officials say is safe. Its test results showed it was five times dirtier than a toilet seat. The researchers said the germs they found could easily cause symptoms similar to food poisoning, such as diarrhea and upset stomachs. They named these illnesses “QWERTY tummy,” after the first six letters on the keyboard. The magazine recommended people clean their keyboards regularly to stay healthy and avoid stomach bugs.

The magazine said almost half the people they interviewed cleaned their keyboard less than once a month. Ten percent of people said they never cleaned it. Editor, Sarah Kidner, warned: “Most people don't give much thought to the [dirt] that builds up on their PC....But if you don't clean your computer, you might as well eat your lunch off the toilet.” The main causes of germs and bacteria are crumbs and other small pieces of food that drop onto the keys while workers eat at their desks. Oily fingers from eating potato chips and fries also attract bacteria. Joanne Baxter, a secretary from West London, said she was shocked at this news. “I had no idea that my keyboard could make me ill. I'm afraid to find out what nasty things there are hiding under my keys.” she said.

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TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true or false:

- a. Computer keyboards can be unhygienic and make us ill.
- b. Toilet seats are 150 times more hygienic than the average keyboard
- c. Many germs found on keyboards can cause food poisoning.
- d. Typing QWERTY (the first six keyboards letters) helps keep germs away.
- e. Around fifty per cent of people clean their keyboards each month.
- f. An editor said eating your lunch in the toilet is safer than at your desk.
- g. Eating fries while using a keyboard can attract bacteria and germs.
- h. A secretary couldn't wait to find the bacteria hiding in her keyboard.

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. Discovered | a. lab |
| 2. Laboratory | b. stomach |
| 3. Disgusting | c. sick |
| 4. Symptoms | d. nasty |
| 5. Tummy | e. questioned |
| 6. Interviewed | f. greasy |
| 7. Dirt | g. found |
| 8. builds up | h. filth |
| 9. Oily | i. collects |
| 10. Ill | j. signs |

PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. keyboards could be bad | a. to food poisoning |
| 2. people at risk | b. lunch off the toilet |
| 3. 150 times more bacteria than health | c. of illness |
| 4. cause symptoms similar | d. under my keys |
| 5. ... to stay healthy and | e. officials say is safe |
| 6. ... cleaned their keyboard less | f. up on their PC |
| 7. the [dirt] that builds | g. avoid stomach bugs |
| 8. you might as well eat your | h. bacteria |
| 9. potato chips and fries also attract | i. for our health |
| 10. find out what nasty things there are hiding | j. than once a month |