

Germophobia Bytes Brits: Antibacterial Products Go Viral

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With the Easter bank holiday imminent, many Brits will be taking the opportunity of the long weekend to take out sponges, mops and cloths to give the house a spring clean.

But it seems fear about germs may be an important factor when attacking the cleaning this year as latest research from Mintel reveals as many as 7.3 million Brits (14%) claim to be more concerned about germs than they used to be and today as many as 16% of Brits worry about germs in the home.

Furthermore, Mintel's research highlights a real desire to keep away from germs by nearly half (46%) of Brits who regularly use antibacterial hand wash - and 16% of the nation who want to be germ-free even when on the move, admitting to regularly carrying hand sanitizer with them.

Richard Caines, Senior Household Care Analyst at Mintel, said:

“Spring cleaning is a priority for many Brits this bank holiday, and with the warmer weather and longer and lighter days, this is certainly a good time of the year for the promotion of new cleaning products. A clean home environment improves people's sense of well-being and reduces anxiety, even more so at a time when incomes are being squeezed and less money is available for going out. Although some people think that as a nation we are becoming too obsessed about hygiene, manufacturers still have a big opportunity to market cleaning products focused on protecting and caring for the home and family, something that has resonance with consumers.”

Britain's concerns about germs are also reflected in the wide use of disinfectant products by British consumers. Mintel's research reveals that when choosing disinfectant products, the desire for products that are powerful germ killers has increased by 9% amongst Brits in just one year, up from 61% in 2011 to 70% in 2012. Moreover, some 12% of germ obsessed Brits even go as far as looking at product labels to see what specific germs they kill.

And it seems new product development is also capitalising on British germophobia, as latest data from Mintel's Global New Products Database (GNPD) shows. Across the household market, over the last year (2011) the UK was the most active country with 13% of household products carrying an antibacterial claim, much higher compared to the other European countries. In fact, amongst the Big Five, antibacterial claims accounted for only 5% in France, Germany and Italy, while in Spain for only 2%.

And with the boom in technology, a new fear is evolving - tech hygiene. The ubiquity of touch-screen technology, thanks to increasing tablet ownership, has made tech hygiene a very modern health issue. Indeed, last year, as many as three in 10 (30%) Brits said they would consider using a special cleaner or polish for their gadgets (eg mobile, laptop, MP3) and this trend is not set to slow down either as ownership of these gadgets is thriving. Mintel estimates that almost six in 10 (56%) Brits own a smartphone and 31% a portable media player. Moreover, 14% of British households plan to buy or upgrade their smartphones in the next three months while a further 10% will do the same with tablets.

“A proliferation of electronic gadgets has been seen in UK homes, and items such as mobile phones and laptops are a breeding ground for germs and a source for the spread of infection. The removal of fingerprints, smudges and smears may be a key benefit for mobile phone cleaning, but not enough. While the desire to clean and disinfect mobile phones could lead to increased usage of existing household cleaning products, the rise of the touch screen smartphone creates a need for new types of cleaning products, which translates into a significant opportunity for manufacturers to introduce a new cleaning ritual. Combined claims of cleanliness and hygiene will be vital if this nascent sub-sector is to progress.” Richard concludes.

Finally, it is not only tablet ownership which is contributing to the spread of bacteria, new office habits are also helping bacteria breed. While hot desking is becoming common practice in many offices, increasingly time-pressed employees are eating food at their desk. Today, over a quarter (26%) of Brits eat breakfast at their work desk during the week while a quarter (25%) of Brits sacrifice their lunch hour in order to be more productive “eating at desko”.

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