

Is Your Toothbrush an Active Germ Colony? Probably.

According to the *Journal of the American Dental Association*, "Studies have shown that contaminated toothbrushes not only harbor, but also transmit both viruses and bacteria that cause systemic, localized and oral inflammatory diseases."

As early as 1920, it was reported that toothbrushes could be a source of repeated oral infections. Toothbrushes kept in a moist environment like that of a bathroom retained up to 50 percent of herpes simplex virus Type I for a week.

Several studies have focused on methods of toothbrush disinfection and found that soaking toothbrushes for 20 minutes in a rinse containing "essential oils" killed 100 percent of the bacteria present.

The worst place for your toothbrush: On the bathroom sink

There's nothing wrong with the sink itself--but it's awfully chummy with the toilet. There are 3.2 million microbes per square inch in the average toilet bowl, according to germ expert Chuck Gerba, PhD, a professor of environmental microbiology at the University of Arizona. When you flush, aerosolized toilet funk is propelled as far as 6 feet, settling on the floor, the sink, and your toothbrush.

By Jessie Knadler, for Prevention Magazine