



WITH NICOLE BIJLSMA



PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

EVERY HOUSE NEEDS SOME GERMS

Exposure to microbes early in life can help set up a healthy gut

Nine out of 10 cells in our body are microbes (primarily bacteria), most of which are in our gut. And they're keeping you healthy.

Your "microbial signature" is unique and varies depending upon what your mother ate during pregnancy, how you were delivered, how you were fed

(breast milk or formula), whether you had a pet and/or older siblings in the first two years of life and your history of antibiotic use.

Emerging evidence suggests that the greater the diversity of bacteria in your gut before the age of two, the less likely you are to develop an allergic disease such as eczema later on in life.

However, there are concerns that the overuse of antibacterial products is reducing the diversity of bacteria in our homes. When it comes to germs, the focus should be on reducing the microbial load in living environments and not killing them with harsh chemicals. Read on to find out how.

HOW TO GET RID OF NASTY GERMS

- Wash your hands with traditional soap before eating and after going to the toilet, after touching pets and after handling raw meat.
- To prevent cross infection, a dedicated microfibre cloth used in the kitchen should be different to the cloth used in the bathroom.
- Wash kitchen tea towels and dishcloths daily.
- Keep benchtops dry as microbes thrive in moist environments.
- Scrub chopping boards

- between use and expose them to full sun regularly.
- Do a food audit. Throw out expired foods and dented food tins, and store foods in glass sealed containers with a label of the date.
- Eat leftovers within two days to avoid bad bacteria.
- Fridge temperatures should be below 5°C. On a weekly basis, wipe the insides down with a damp microfibre cloth that's has been sprinkled with a little bicarbonate soda.



When dusting or wiping down, use a damp microfibre cloth followed by a dry clean towel, on high contact areas. Choose traditional soap over antibacterial soap. Avoid furnishings impregnated with antibacterial agents. There's insufficient proof that they prevent infection. Encourage kids to play outside. Getting their hands dirty increases their exposure to a beneficial microbes.

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