

Can Eating at Your Desk Make You Sick?

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Sensia Healthcare
www.sensiahealthcare.com
(414) 359-0800

A 2007 study by the University of Arizona revealed the average desktop contains 100 times more bacteria than a kitchen table and 400 more than the average toilet seat. Since 83% of Americans typically snack or eat lunch at their desktop to save time and money, it's important to follow good food handling practices to protect yourself from food-borne illnesses that could lead to missed time from work and costly doctor visits.



Here are a few tips on how to dine safely at your desktop:

- Wash your hands with warm soap and water before and after handling food. Keep hand sanitizer or moist towelettes nearby if a sink is not available.
- Wash your work areas before and after eating on them. A recent Home Food Safety survey revealed only 36% of respondents clean their desktop, keyboard, mouse or phone weekly and 64% admit to doing so only once a month. A clean desktop and hands are your best defense against foodborne illnesses at work.
- Store your perishable food in a designated employee refrigerator or bring an insulated bag containing an ice pack. Most people surveyed noted their break room refrigerator was rarely cleaned. Perishable foods need to be refrigerated within 2 hours of removing it from your home refrigerator.
- Leftovers or frozen dinners should also be reheated in a microwave to the proper temperature. Leftovers should be reheated to 165 degrees Fahrenheit to kill any harmful bacteria that may be present. Using a food thermometer during the heating process can ensure the proper temperature is achieved.

Source: *American Dietetic Association*