

The Cell Phone

What's lurking: Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

Think of MRSA as staph on steroids—it's resistant to most antibiotics and can be deadly if it enters the bloodstream. And even though MRSA usually hides in hospitals, at least 12 percent of the infections in 2005 occurred in the general community, often inside locker rooms.

Another hot zone: cell phones. When University of Arizona researchers tested 25 cell phones, 20 percent came up positive for MRSA. "When was the last time you cleaned your cell phone? I'm willing to bet never," says Charles Gerba, Ph.D., the study's lead researcher and coauthor of *The Germ Freak's Guide to Outwitting Cold and Flu*. "These things are very germy, especially the keypads and mouthpieces." Picture it: Every time you dial a number or send a text message, you're transferring the germs on your hands to your phone and then straight to your mouth.

How to beat it: Sanitize your cell once a week with Clorox disinfecting wipes (or any of the supermarket-brand clones). "The wipes won't get into the internal parts of the phone and damage it the way a spray might," says Gerba. If you want more peace of mind, consider Motorola's i870 cellphone. The i870 comes treated with AgION Antimicrobial, a very fine ceramic powder coating that contains silver ions, the same substance that's woven into some gym apparel to help inhibit the growth of bacteria.