



# Gerba: Sometimes It's Better Not To Clean

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According to Dr. Charles Gerba, famed microbiologist with the University of Arizona, in some cases "it may be better not to clean a surface than to clean it with soiled cleaning tools... [because] it can spread microorganisms around without your realizing it."

Gerba says that as some cleaning tools, such as sponges, mops, and microfiber cloths, are used, "they actually become micropile compost heaps. In many cases, [the cleaning worker] is just laying down a thin layer of E. coli over the surface as they clean."

To examine this, a series of soil removal tests compared conventional cleaning methods with no-touch, high-flow fluid extraction systems.

With these cleaning systems, a machine applies cleaning chemicals to surfaces to be cleaned. The same areas are then pressure-rinsed. After this, a built-in wet/vac system vacuums up solution, rinse water, and contaminants.

To determine whether contaminants were present, an ATP monitoring system was used. The existence of ATP, or adenosine triphosphate, on surfaces is considered a "red flag" that potential disease-causing germs and bacteria are present.

### **Testing Procedure... and Surprises**

In one test, a floor was cleaned and tested for ATP. A low reading of 25 was measured and used as a benchmark.

Then a grape, which contains very high levels of ATP, was spread over the tile floor. The ATP level jumped to 7267.

The same area was then mopped with a new microfiber mop head soaked in hospital-grade disinfectant. ATP levels dropped to 1479.

"But surprisingly, surrounding tile areas saw their ATP reading jump from 25 to nearly 700," says John Richter, an engineer/researcher with Kaivac, Inc.

According to Richter, contaminants can become entangled in mop fibers and are redistributed in the cleaning process. "This means the microfiber mop head, as it became soiled, actually spread contaminants to nearby tiles, causing cross contamination," he says.

Next, a high-flow fluid extraction/no-touch cleaning system was tested. Again a grape was spread over a clean surface with an initial ATP measurement of 25. After the grape was applied, the reading jumped to nearly 8000.

"We cleaned the floor using the same disinfectant but with the high-flow fluid extractor, but this time the ATP level dropped to 27," says Richter. "What's more, the ATP level on the surrounding floor areas dropped even further, to about 20, indicating no evidence of cross contamination."

According to Gerba, the professional cleaning industry is really in the health-care business. "Preventing cross contamination and effectively removing soils and contaminants reduces illness and helps keep people healthy."

For more information and to view a video on this study, visit [here](#).

### **About Kaivac**

Headquartered in Hamilton, OH, Kaivac, Inc., manufactures a full line of No-Touch cleaning products aimed at making cleaning processes safer for people and the environment while preserving quality and cost efficiency.

<http://www.kaivac.com>

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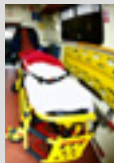
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