

HYGIENE

Wipe before you swipe

U.S. Cellular reminds public to keep smartphones free of germs this flu season

Staff Reports

LAKE COUNTY » The average smartphone has 10 times more bacteria on it than most toilet seats according to Charles Gerba, a University of Arizona microbiologist.

Bacteria can linger on a device and has the potential to make users ill, especially when sharing electronics with someone else that has recently been sick. That's why it's critical to keep cellphones clean, especially during peak cold and flu season.

"It's important to regularly clean and disinfect smartphones and tablets to protect our health," said Erryn Andersen, director of sales for U.S. Cellular in the northwest. "Now that cold and flu season is upon us, take every precaution to stay healthier and avoid the germs that can cause illnesses. Keeping devices clean is a smart practice that can go a long way in preventing unpleasant — and even dangerous — symptoms."

U.S. Cellular reminds mobile users to wipe before they swipe and offers the following tips to disinfect Apple and Android devices:

- Wash your hands. Studies show that germs travel easily from hands to devices. Clean hands transmit fewer germs onto smartphones and other surfaces, so wash hands regularly and thoroughly.
- Disinfect devices and

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cases regularly. Use a disinfectant wipe that does not contain bleach and wring the wipe out several times before use to minimize moisture on and near the device. After using the disinfectant wipe, follow up with a microfiber cloth. Or you can use specialized cleaners made for electronics, such as Gadget Guard Greener Cleaner. This should be done routinely, especially if other people have handled them or if anyone in the family has been sick.

- Try antibiotic putty. The most stubborn areas to clean are the device's headphone jack, charging port, speaker and microphone openings. Don't use a toothpick or Q-tip to clean these small spaces, since they can damage circuitry and/or leave behind cotton fibers. Instead, use antibiotic putty designed specifically for electronics, such as Cyber Clean.

- Don't use devices in the bathroom. In a survey from Inc.com, 61 percent of people admitted to using their phone while in the restroom. The habit of "toilet texting" can cause users to become ill, as germs from the bathroom can wind up on the phone.