

valet.

STAY HEALTHY
ON YOUR NEXT FLIGHT



NEVER GET ON A PLANE
WITHOUT THIS



CleanWell Hand Sanitizer

It's alcohol free, has a subtle citrus scent and the flat design of the bottle discreetly fits into the exterior pocket of any travel bag. Since it's a spray (not a gel), you can spritz the top of your tray table, your arm rest, the air vent nozzle and any other likely contaminated surface you may touch on the plane.

There are typically two types of air travelers ... window seat people and aisle sitters. I've long maintained that the window seat is the best seat on the plane. I like the views. And I know it's somewhat selfish, but hear me out: When you're by the window, no one bothers you. But the aisle? Sure, you might be able to stretch out but you're at the mercy of everyone else. The flight attendants and their drink cart, and passengers like me who ask you to move whenever we need to get up or use the bathroom.

But maybe I should stop bothering those aisle folk and stay put. That seems to be the takeaway from a study published this week in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. "I have always chosen window seats," says Vicki Hertzberg, a biostatistician at Emory University, who co-led the research with scientists at The Boeing Co. "But after this study, I have stopped moving around as much on flights."

For the study, the scientists chronicled behaviors and movements of individuals in the economy cabin during 10 transcontinental flights. They found that aisle sitters came into contact with other passengers more than five times as often as those sitting by a window. Hertzberg and her team determined that window people were more protected from all those antsy flyers moving about the cabin, coughing and sneezing. Honestly, have you ever noticed how it seems that people cough and sneeze *way more* on planes than they do in say, a movie theater or conference room? What's up with that?

Of course, these recent findings may seem slightly obvious, but the study is actually one of the first to specifically look at how germs spread on airplanes, given the common belief that simply being on a flight raises your chances of getting sick. According to the International Air Transport Association [[PDF](#)], in-cabin HEPA filters can get rid of 99.9995% of germs and microbes in the air. But that recirculated air is still as dry as a desert and as thin as the atmosphere at an elevation of 8,000 feet above sea level. Which is why so many of us feel groggy and dehydrated after a flight. Though the air is only one concern.



Another study, by microbiologists hired by [Travelmath](#), found that seat-back tray tables, not so surprisingly, are a hotbed of illness-inducing bacteria. They discovered a whopping 2,155 colony-forming units (CFU) per square inch on tray tables collected from four different airlines. In contrast, the study found an average of "just" 265 CFU per square inch on the lavatory flush button—more than what was found on the seatbelt buckle, but still less than the overhead air vent.

This serves as a good reminder: trust no one. Not all bacterial is bad, but plenty can get you sick. Treat everything as potentially harmful, because it very well may be. [Drexel Medicine](#), the healthcare system affiliated with Philadelphia's Drexel University College of Medicine, called the airplane bathroom, "a breeding ground for bacteria like E. coli." In fact, the healthcare professionals there advise against flyers directly touching anything in the lavatories with their hands. They suggest using paper towels when touching the faucet or toilet seat lid.

Is this overkill? Perhaps. But what's the harm in taking proper precautions? Think of it like safe sex. What do you really know about this plane? Who's taken a ride and what have they done? Sure, *you're* a gentleman and you wouldn't ever stuff a used tissue, old band-aid or dirty diaper into the seatback pocket. But that doesn't mean others haven't. And for God's sake man, don't even think about picking up that in-flight magazine.