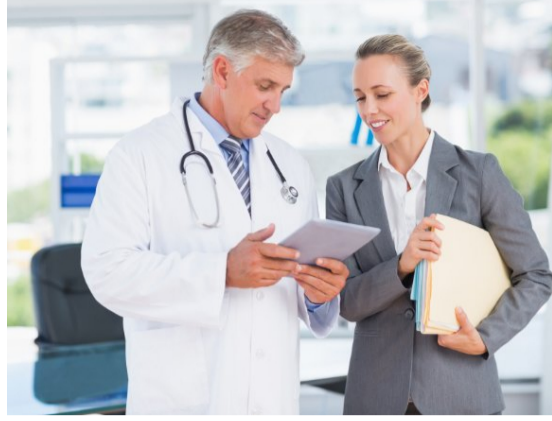


Hot Topics In Risk Management



Our Risk Management Team is here to help you minimize and mitigate Medical Professional Liability risk.



Sanitize Your Smartphone

Physicians, other health care professionals, and office and practice staff rely on smartphones and mobile devices for an endless list of personal and professional activities but often pick up their potentially contaminated phone or device with their freshly washed hands. According to University of Arizona microbiologist Charles Gerba, most cell phones harbor 10 times more bacteria than the average toilet seat.^[1] They are rich in bacteria, fungi, and ribonucleic acid (RNA) viruses.^[2] A recent study identified six types of bacteria on nurses' and residents' cell phones and more than one type was growing on 30% of the phones.^[3] While most health care professionals likely recognize their devices foster bacteria, studies show they rarely clean them.^[4] Start the new year with smartphones and electronic devices as part of hand hygiene or infection control and transmission policies.

Action Items for Hand Hygiene Policies

- Turn off the device before cleaning.
- Remove fingerprints and other signs of contamination using a dry microfiber cloth.^[5]
- Mist a microfiber cleaning cloth with an appropriate spray cleanser and wipe the device with the cloth. Do not spray cleaners or disinfectants directly on devices.
- Follow manufacturers' instructions for cleaning and disinfection products and procedures.^[6]
- If there is no manufacturer's guidance, consider alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol. Thoroughly dry surfaces so liquid does not pool.^[7]
- Do not spray liquid cleaners into charging ports.
- Use wipeable screen protectors or covers for electronics.^[8]
- Let the phone or device air dry before putting it back in a case.
- Clean protective cases, covers, and accessories, such as chargers or headphones.
- Wash hands before and after the cleaning process.
- Consider providing ultraviolet phone cleaners in the office or practice.^[9] Most require just five minutes of ultraviolet exposure.

[1] University of Arizona. (2012, September 15). *Why your cellphone has more germs than a toilet*. <https://cals.arizona.edu/news/why-your-cellphone-has-more-germs-toilet>

[2] Ibrahim, T., Chamseddine, A.N., & Baz, M. (2020, May). Mobile phones: a forgotten source of SARS-CoV-2 transmission. *American Journal of Infection Control*, 48(8), 971-72. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016%2Fi.a.2020.05.019>

[3] The most common pathogens cultured were coagulase-negative *Staphylococcus*, *Acinetobacter*, and *S. aureus*. Others included *Enterococcus faecalis*, *Pseudomonas* spp., and *Bacillus cereus*. Malhotra, S., Wlodarczyk, J., Kuo, C., Ngo, C., Glucoft, M., Sumulong, I., Smit, M.A., & Bender, J.M. (2020, June). Shining a light on the pathogenicity of health care providers' mobile phones: Use of a novel ultraviolet-C wave disinfection device. *American Journal of Infection Control*, 48(aa), 1370-74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.a.2020.05.040>

[4] Jennings, R. (2020, May 18). *Washing your hands is important. So is cleaning your healthcare devices*. Health Tech Magazine. <https://healthtechmagazine.net/article/2020/05/washing-your-hands-important-so-cleaning-your-healthcare-devices> (citing a 2018 study that found that although two-thirds of health care professionals surveyed suspected their mobile devices fostered bacteria, 90 percent did not clean these devices).

[5] CDC. (2020, July 10). *Cleaning and disinfection for households*. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html>

[6] Id. Find cleaning instructions for Apple devices at <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT204172>. Samsung provides guidance at <https://www.sammobile.com/news/samsung-guide-how-to-clean-your-phone-coronavirus/>.

[7] Id.

[8] Id.

[9] Researchers from the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles, who were searching for an effective and convenient solution, tested a new UV-C hands-free device with a 30-second cleaning cycle. Specific information about the device is included in the article. Malhotra, S., et al., Wlodarczyk, J., Kuo, C., Ngo, C., Glucoft, M., Sumulong, I., Smit, M.A., & Bender, J.M. (2020, June). Shining a light on the pathogenicity of health care providers' mobile phones: Use of a novel ultraviolet-C wave disinfection device. *American Journal of Infection Control*, 48(aa), 1370-74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.a.2020.05.040>

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