Wash your hands. The Centers for Disease Control says this is the one thing we can do to protect our health. So if you have been diligent in washing your hands on a regular basis for the full 20 seconds required to get rid of germs, good for you. However, there are so many things in our immediate vicinity that are much germier than you might imagine.

Let’s say you have diligently washed as you left the bathroom. For most of us ladies, the next thing we pick up is our purse. Recent research has shown that many purses carry more bacteria than the average toilet. Twenty percent of all handbags carry enough bacteria to be a threat to our health.

Think about it. Your purse comes into regular contact with your hands, the floor and other germy places — and they are rarely cleaned. A dirty bag transfers germs to your clean hands and the cycle continues. In particular, leather bags are an ideal environment for most bacteria because they have a spongy surface that absorbs and hides germs.

When you are eating out, the only place to put your purse seems to be on the floor or on the table. Now, you can buy great little hooks that slip over the edge of a restaurant table and suspend your purse where it doesn’t touch the floor, but it isn’t on the table. It keeps your purse cleaner and doesn’t spread bacteria that might be present on your purse to the table where you are eating.

What’s inside the bag is another challenge. According to recent research in Medical News Today, hand cream containers are the dirtiest and most infected items carried in the handbag. Then we spread those germs around by rubbing that hand cream on our hands. It might be time to throw out your bottle and start anew.

So take a few minutes and clean your bag. Wash it off with a cleaner that is safe for the material and then disinfect it with antibacterial wipes.
There are many other places where bacteria lurk. Think first about your kitchen countertops. After all, where do we set those germy handbags? I have a friend that won’t allow a purse on her countertop or dining table. Smart lady. Many kitchen counters have dangerous levels of coliform bacteria that were deposited there by carriers such as your purse or hands. Countertops should be washed first to remove the soil, then sanitized regularly.

Think about the keyboard on your computer, especially if lots of hands are using it. I took a quick look at mine and headed for the cleaner. It was positively grimy. How to clean keyboards without breaking anything is a real challenge. First, unplug the computer so there is no power. Start by gently dusting the keyboard with a soft brush, then follow up with compressed air that can be purchased at an office supply store. Now that the keyboard is cleaner, it is time to take care of the germs. Dip a paper towel or cotton swab in isopropyl alcohol. Rub it over the surface of the keys and down between the keys. It isn’t necessary to have the towel soaking wet, only damp. The alcohol evaporates quickly, so it doesn’t harm the keyboard.

Phones are another overlooked surface. Both cell phones and land phones need regular cleaning to work properly. Clean the dirt off first, then use alcohol on a paper towel as described for the keyboard.

When was the last time you wiped down your staircase rail? Everyone’s hands go there, dirty or clean. A quick wipe with a disinfectant spray on a paper towel will do the job.

We think we’ve gotten the largest part of the germs in our homes if we keep the bathroom immaculate and our hands clean. However, germs lurk everywhere. Think about those forgotten germs and get rid of them. You’ll be healthier for it.

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