Spring is here and you might be indulging in a little spring-cleaning. But more than the closets and corners need to be cleaned. We often overlook the electronics in our home.

Electronics are one of the most expensive and most delicate pieces of equipment we own. Cellphones, computers and other electronics are constantly used and as such, can be a real magnet for germs. However, you don’t want to damage these pricey pieces of equipment with your cleaning process.

Touchscreens on iPads and tablets seem to attract dirt and germs. A 2010 study published in the Journal of Microbiology proved that 23 percent of viruses can be transferred from your hands to the screen or vice versa. There are special cleaners available to clean the touch screen, or use a slightly damp, soft cloth. Never use glass cleaner on a touch screen because it will harm the protective coating.

Cellphones are another easily contaminated electronic. A survey from the London School of Hygiene says that one in six is contaminated with fecal matter. As disgusting as that is, it isn’t easy to clean your phone. If you have an old style cellphone (without a touch screen) a cotton swab wet with a 60 percent water, 40 percent alcohol solution can clean up any wayward germs. Clean the surface, then remove the protective cover and clean all the corners of the cover.

Touch screen phones are a little more complicated. You can purchase a UV sanitizer (about $100) and zap it once a day, or use special wireless wipes to clean it up that cost about $3 for 12 wipes. Don’t spray glass cleaner directly on the phone or use a paper towel — they may scratch the screen. A homegrown solution is to use the water/alcohol solution on a clean microfiber cloth. Dampen the cloth slightly and scrub away. Don’t spray any electronic gear directly with a cleaning solution. Harsh chemicals and moisture can damage the phone.
Keyboards are another germ haven. Unplug the keyboard, turn it upside down and shake out all those cracker crumbs. You might want to use a can of compressed air to blow out the stubborn pieces. The same cotton swab wet with the water/alcohol solution will help you clean the edges of the keys and get rid of the embedded dirt.

Computer screens and televisions often have a layer of dust that can be dislodged by using a clean, dry cloth. Again, don’t use harsh chemical sprays. They will harm the protective surfaces.

Earbuds or headphones can gather dust, earwax and stubborn fingerprints. Headphones can be cleaned with a little dish soap mixed in water on a microfiber cloth. Rub gently and use as little moisture as possible. Earbuds should be cleaned with the water/alcohol solution on a cotton swab.

Remote controls are another oft overlooked surface. A recent study by the University of Virginia School of Medicine found that remote controls are one of the germiest surfaces in the house. Use a microfiber cloth with the water/alcohol solution to clean the remote on a monthly basis, more often if there are lots of hands holding it. If you travel often like I do, you might want to drop the motel remote in a plastic bag to protect your hands from the last guest’s germs.

As you get ready to clean up after the ravages of the winter, don’t forget to clean your electronics to protect your health.

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