

# Health and Hygiene - Fear of Germs and Bacteria - UK - September 2009

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## What is this report about?

Swine flu has been at the centre of media coverage since May 2009. Now declared a pandemic with government advertising to educate people of ways to reduce the spread of the virus, it has very much entered the public consciousness. Qualitative research run by Mintel with Toluna shows that, although people claim not to have changed their hygiene habits in the wake of the swine flu publicity, they do appear to be more aware of germs. A number of respondents bought on-the-go hand sanitisers and amongst a few, there is a heightened sensitivity to others who are showing symptoms of a cold or flu. For these consumers, antibacterial products and sanitisers offer a barrier and respond to their fear of getting ill. Particularly with the backdrop of the recession, adults who are still in employment may be reluctant to take time off sick for fear of losing their jobs. Retailers such as Superdrug have reported a spike in sales of some hygiene products.

## What have we found out?

- The most avid purchasers of antibacterial products have children in the household. They are motivated by keeping the house as hygienic as possible for their family.
- Around 27 million adults subscribe to the philosophy that some germs can be good for you - an attitude that may reduce the perceived need for antibacterial products.
- An estimated 22 million households used liquid soap in 2008, representing a rise of 1.6 million households since 2007. This is expected to continue to rise in 2009 on the back of the government's swine flu campaign encouraging people to wash their hands more often.
- Men are less concerned about germs and bacteria than women; women generally take responsibility for the health of the household.
- More than 3 million adults do not believe that antibacterial products are any better than standard products and may find it hard to justify paying extra for an antibacterial product variant.
- Adults who travel most days by public transport are the least likely to think that exposure to germs is a good thing. They offer a key target for hand sanitizers and sampling campaigns at busy commuter hubs.

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