

>> LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION:

Store owners aren't the only ones concerned with finding the perfect spot in which to situate their stuff. Researchers in a wide variety of fields know that how you organize your environment—from where you stand in fitness class to the place you choose to store your meds—has a surprising effect on everything from your weight to your chances of staying well. In other words, when it comes to how you feel, it's not just what you do, it's where you do it. Here, surprisingly bad locales for your health—and the best places to optimize it.

THE WORST PLACE FOR YOUR TOOTHBRUSH >> ON THE BATHROOM SINK

There's nothing wrong with the sink itself—but it's awfully chummy with the toilet. There are 3.2 million microbes per square inch in the average toilet bowl, according to germ expert Chuck Gerba, PhD, a professor of environmental microbiology at the University of Arizona. When you flush, aerosolized toilet funk is propelled as far as 6 feet, settling on the floor, the sink, and your toothbrush. "Unless you like rinsing with toilet water, keep your toothbrush behind closed doors—in the medicine cabinet or a nearby cupboard," Gerba says.

THE WORST PLACE FOR YOUR SNEAKERS AND FLIP-FLOPS

>> IN THE BEDROOM CLOSET
Walking through your house in shoes you wear outside is a great way to track in allergens and contaminants. A 1999 study found that lawn chemicals were tracked inside the house for a full week after application, concentrated along the traffic route from the entryway. Shoes also carry in pollen and other allergens. Reduce exposure by slipping off rough-and-tumble shoes by the door; store

them in a basket or under an entryway bench. If your pumps stay off the lawn, they can make the trip to the bedroom—otherwise, carry them.

THE WORST PLACE TO TRY TO FALL ASLEEP >> UNDER PILES OF BLANKETS

Being overheated can keep you from nodding off, researchers say: A natural nighttime drop in your core temperature triggers your body to get drowsy. To ease your way to sleep, help your body radiate heat from your hands and feet, says Helen Burgess, PhD, assistant director of the Biological Rhythms Research Laboratory at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. Don socks to dilate the blood vessels in the extremities—then take the socks off and let a foot stick out from under the blankets.

THE WORST PLACE TO COOL LEFTOVERS >> IN THE REFRIGERATOR

Placing a big pot of hot edibles directly into the fridge is a recipe for uneven cooling and possibly food poisoning, says O. Peter Snyder Jr., PhD, president of the Hospitality Institute of Technology and Management in St. Paul, MN. The reason: It can take a long time for

the temperature in the middle of a big container to drop, creating a cozy environment for bacteria. You can safely leave food to cool on the counter for up to an hour after cooking, Snyder says. Or divvy up hot food into smaller containers and then refrigerate—it'll cool faster.

THE WORST PLACE FOR A WORKOUT REMINDER >> STUCK ON YOUR POST-IT LADEN FRIDGE

A visual nudge can help—but only if you notice it, says Paddy Ekkekakis, PhD, an exercise psychologist at Iowa State University. In one study, a sign urging people to use the stairs rather than the nearby escalator increased the number of people who climbed on foot by nearly 200%. Put your prompt near a decision point, Ekkekakis says—keep your pile of Pilates DVDs next to the TV; put a sticky note on your steering wheel to make sure you get to your after-work kickboxing class. Just remember: The boost you get from a reminder is usually short-term, so change the visuals often.

THE WORST PLACE TO SIT ON AN AIRPLANE

>> THE REAR Avoid this section if you're prone to airsickness, says retired United Airlines pilot Meryl Getline, who operates the aviation Web site *fromthecockpit.com*. "Think of a seesaw," Getline says. "The farther from the center you are, the more up-and-down movement you experience." Because the tail of the plane tends to be longer than the front, "that's the bumpiest of all," she says. "The smoothest option is sitting as close to the wing as you can."



THE WORST PLACE FOR YOUR COFFEE >> THE REFRIGERATOR OR FREEZER

Think that you're preserving freshness by stashing it in the fridge? Think again. Every time you take it out of the fridge or freezer, you expose it to fluctuating temperatures, which produces condensation. "The moisture leeches out flavor—it's like brewing a cup of coffee each time," says John McGregor, PhD, a professor in the department of food science and human nutrition at Clemson University. The best spot to store beans or grounds: in an opaque, airtight container kept on the counter or in the pantry.