

What's the most important equipment in the gym?

If you said a treadmill, stair climber, or an elliptical, you're not even close. Nor is it a set of weights, a weight machine or a stability ball. It's your ubiquitous disinfectant-filled spray bottle.



At the *Health & Fitness Centre* we are striving to promote both *health* and *fitness*.

Spray for your health. Disinfecting the workout areas after use can help reduce exposure to contaminated surfaces, cross-contamination and bacterial growth, especially in dark moist areas, such as folded, perspiration-soaked yoga mats. Some antibiotic-resistant bacteria (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)) lives on skin and survives on objects and surfaces such as gym equipment, mats and towels for more than 24 hours. Although *S. aureus* is found on the skin or in the noses of healthy people, it is one of the most common causes of skin infections. Most infections are minor, resulting in pimples and boils. While some can have more serious implications such as surgical wound infections and pneumonia, requiring treatment with antibiotics. MRSA is hard to treat with antibiotics, and can result in life-threatening blood or bone infections. Coming in contact with any contaminated surface in the gym may put you at risk of an infection.

Spray for your equipment. Sweat, considered by some the “acid rain of fitness”, contains by-products that contribute to a shorter life span of the exercise equipment. By using a disinfectant-filled spray bottle after each use, you can help remove the residue, and extend the life span of your favourite machines, and keep them in good working conditions.

The unspoken rules of gym etiquette dictate the following:

- **Wipe** down your cardio equipment, weight machines, stability ball and a mat using a towel **and** a disinfectant*
- **Remove and discard** used tissues from the crevices of the cardio equipment[†]
- **Throw** used towels into a dirty towel bin[‡]

So, after you finished your workout, take ownership of your machine and your workout area. Claim all your used towels. Exercise your fingers. Use the spray bottle. Help keep your gym equipment and surroundings clean. It not only helps to prolong the life of the equipment, but also makes the exercise environment more pleasant and healthful for you and your fellow members. Help us preserve “*Health*” in “*Health & Fitness*”.

*especially if heavy perspiration is a factor

[†]used tissue had been known to find a permanent home in the water bottle holders of a stair climber

[‡]abandoned towels scattered around the gym have been sighted on occasion

Reference

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). Division of Public Health Notifiable Diseases Section. Atlanta, Georgia. www.health.state.ga