

# IHRSA's Guide to Health Club Cleanliness





## IHRSA Welcome Letter:

**“IF YOU HAVE TIME TO LEAN, YOU HAVE TIME TO CLEAN.”** This clever slogan from Red Lerrile, a club owner and operator in Lafayette, LA, rings true and reinforces the message that maintaining cleanliness is a constant process and not something to be “swept under the rug.”

Keeping a facility clean is undoubtedly a never-ending challenge for a club. In 2007, the typical IHRSA club indicated that they had more than 130,000 club visits, or about 350-plus visits per day. Imagine having 350-plus people touching your desk or using your shower every day: dirt and grime are bound to appear and might even build up if not cleaned properly.

It is imperative for a club not to become complacent with its cleaning and maintenance routines and put an emphasis on awareness of keeping the club clean all day and all year long. The research that follows indicates that club cleanliness is not only expected by members, but can also be rewarding to the club in terms of an increase in member retention, member usage and number of non-dues services and programs that are purchased.

Joe Moore

President & CEO

International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association



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*IHRSA's Guide to Health Club Cleanliness* is published by the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA). IHRSA is a nonprofit trade organization, serving the commercial club industry. At IHRSA, Melissa Rodriguez and Katie Rollauer conducted the online surveys and wrote the report. To order copies of this report or other IHRSA publications, contact: International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association, Seaport Center, 70 Fargo Street, Boston, MA 02210. Please direct purchasing inquiries to Phoebe Anderson at (800) 228-4772.

October 2008

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## About this Report:

In June 2008, IHRSA launched a research program to explore the ways in which perceptions of health club cleanliness have become an important part in retaining members.

Specifically, we wanted to understand how club cleanliness affects member usage, retention and in-center spending. This research project—which includes an online survey of health club members and health club staff, along with a series of interviews among club operators—finds that members are indeed more likely to renew, recommend and increase the use of fee-based services and programs when they perceive the club to be clean.

This report presents the findings of our online surveys of 600 U.S. health club members, 495 health club staff, and in-depth interviews with leaders of health club companies across the country. Of the 600 U.S. health club members surveyed online, 201 were members who had joined their first club within the past six months; another 190 were members who had recently quit a club in the last six months and rejoined another club; and the final 209 consumers

were members of a health club for three or more years. The health club staff sampling included 153 owners, 302 managers and 46 non-management-level employees.

This report also presents the information gathered during interviews with operators at the following companies:

- **ACAC Fitness & Wellness Centers**, Charlottesville, VA – Karen Melcher, Member Services Director
- **Aerofit Health & Fitness**, Bryan, TX – Kathy Langlotz, General Manager & Co-Owner
- **Cherry Hill Health & Racquet Club**, Cherry Hill, NJ – Brian Kosa, General Manager
- **Club Industry Consulting**, Highland Village, TX – Stephen Tharrett, Principal
- **Fayetteville Athletic Club**, Fayetteville, AR – Bob Shoulders, Owner
- **Midtown Tennis Club**, Chicago, IL – Michael Mahoney, Vice President & General Manager
- **Planet Fitness**, Durham, NH – John Craig, Marketing Director
- **World Gym Wantagh**, Wantagh, NY – David Stemplar, General Manager

We would like to extend our gratitude to these operators and consultants for assisting us in this research. Their insight into the topic of health club cleanliness is extremely valuable, and their dedication to the industry is outstanding.

### A note about data presentation:

Unless otherwise noted, the degree scales include the top two options and bottom two options. For example, when the word “clean” is used in reference to degree of cleanliness, clean is defined as the total frequency of those who reported “extremely clean” plus those who reported “somewhat clean.”

IHRSA Research and GOJO Industries developed the hypotheses for this research jointly. GOJO Industries funded the research and publication for our findings, and we would like to acknowledge Mike Hanes, Louise Minor and Jillian Hughes for their contributions and support. At IHRSA, Melissa Rodriguez and Katie Rollauer managed the project and wrote this report.

# Why Invest in Club Cleaning?

**HERE'S WHAT WE KNOW:** A club's cleanliness is a vital part of its operational, social and financial success. For our members, the perception of facility hygiene is a reality. Dollar for dollar, cleanliness might be the most powerful tool to maximize member satisfaction, member retention and average revenue per member in the club. As the following research will show, beyond even the community health and liability benefits of removing germs and bacteria, club cleanliness can lead to increased club revenues for those facilities that place a high priority on getting it right.

According to IHRSA's 2007 Profiles of Success, clubs reported spending an average of 2.9% of total revenues on housekeeping (a range of 1.4% to 4.1%). A further look at club operating data indicates that the more a club spends on housekeeping, the better their performance in other categories, such as revenue growth and member retention (see Table 1).

It is generally accepted that cleanliness has always been among the leading reasons people select a club. When asked about the degree to which a clean club affects a prospect's decision to join or a member to renew, Brian Kosa, general manager at the Cherry Hill Health & Racquet Club, an award-winning multipurpose facility in southern New Jersey, indicated that "on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the

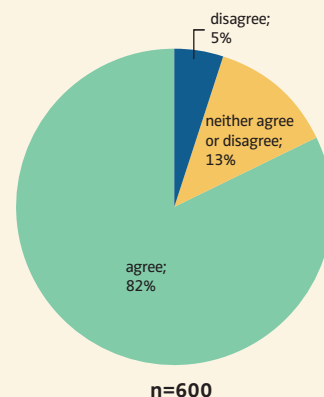
highest, the impact that a clean club has on a member's decision to join is a 10." Additionally, John Craig, marketing director at Planet Fitness Franchising, a fitness-only club company headquartered in New Hampshire, stresses that "the cleanliness of our club is generally the first or second comment a prospect will mention during a facility tour."

Our recent research project goes beyond identifying the leading reasons people join a club in order to support the connection that cleanliness has with greater utilization of club services and the financial benefits that follow. If we accept that a clean club is part of doing business, then an extremely clean club can lead to product differentiation and recognition from our target consumers.

Consumers believe that with the potential spread of illness, it is a club's responsibility to rise to the challenge of club cleanliness. Today's club patron is acutely concerned about germs in gyms, and findings support this with 82% of respondents believing that dirty clubs are more likely to have germs (see Figure 1). Fully 56% of members expect clubs to be germ-free (see Figure 2). Karen Melcher, member services director at ACAC Fitness & Wellness Centers in Charlottesville, VA, a multipurpose, multiclub company dedicated to changing lives through exercise, confirms

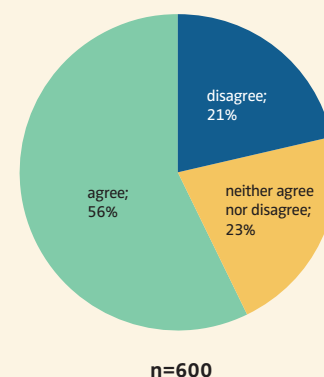
**Figure 1.** Members believe that dirty health clubs are more likely to have germs.

*I believe dirty health clubs or gyms are more likely to have germs.*



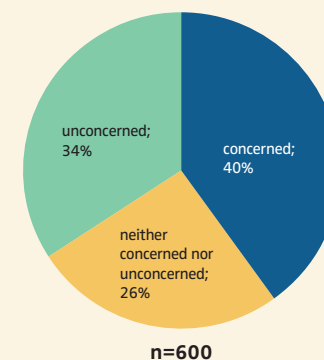
**Figure 2.** Exceed expectations: Members expect the health club to be germ-free.

*I expect my health club or gym to be germ-free.*



**Figure 3.** Members indicate concern about the spread of germs at health club.

*How concerned are you about the spread of germs at the health club or gym you currently use?*



**Table 1.** ROI: There is a direct relationship between club performance and the amount the club spends on housekeeping.

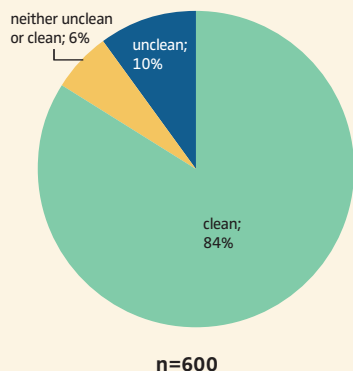
## HOUSEKEEPING SPENDING VS. PROFITABILITY AND GROWTH

	Upper Quartile	Lower Quartile
Housekeeping as % of Total Revenue	6.1%	0.3%
Revenue Growth as % of Total Revenue	5.2%	3.9%
Member Retention as % of Total Revenue	72.0%	65.4%
Revenue per Member	\$1,254.00	\$533.39

Source: IHRSA's 2007 Profiles of Success; n=76

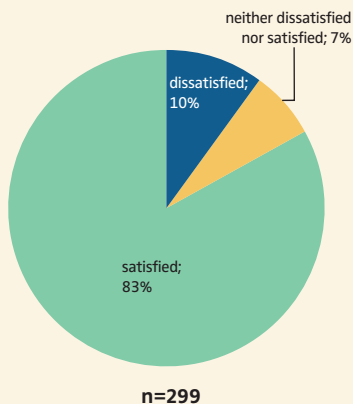
**Figure 4.** Good news: The majority of members perceive their club as clean.

*What degree of cleanliness would you assign to the health club or gym you currently use?*

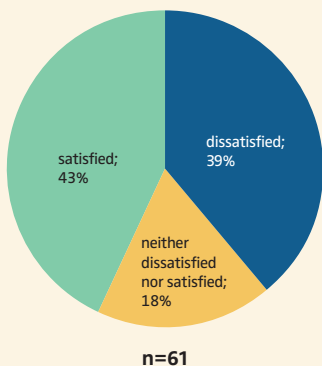


**Figure 5.** When members perceive the club as clean, they are more likely to be satisfied with their club than members who perceive the club as unclean (Figure 6).

*How satisfied are you with the health club or gym you use?*



**Figure 6.** Member satisfaction with current health club when club is perceived as unclean.



that when “people come in they want to see a clean locker room and that the equipment they will be working out on is clean.” And David Stemplar, general manager at the World Gym Wantagh, a 25-year-old multipurpose facility serving the south shore of Long Island, comments: “I think you can have older equipment and older televisions, but if the club isn’t clean, [the members and prospects] are not going to be interested [in the club].”

### The Perception of Club Cleanliness and Member Satisfaction

Every contact with members—from their front desk check-in, to the ease in which they can access available equipment, to participating in their favorite group exercise class—is an opportunity to make the experience a positive one. Common sense indicates that the club operator’s objective should be to keep the club clean.

Kathy Langlotz, general manager & co-owner of Aerofit Health & Fitness, a multipurpose club company with two locations in Bryan, TX, agrees: “Our philosophy is that not everybody knows what the best treadmill is, but they know if it’s clean.” Facility hygiene becomes mission-critical when we see the connection between the member perception of cleanliness and overall member satisfaction. An overwhelming majority (84%) of members perceive their club to be clean (see Figure 4). Of these members who perceive their club as extremely clean, 83% are satisfied with their current health club (see Figure 5), while only 43% of the members who perceive their club as unclean are satisfied with their club (Figure 6).

# Where's the Dirt?

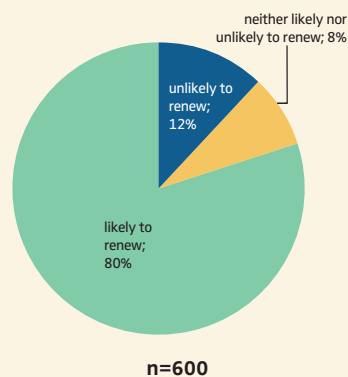
**THE GOOD NEWS** is that two out of three members surveyed reported they had never been to a club they perceived as unclean, and 84% view their current club as clean (see Figure 4). Members' perceptions of cleanliness create an opportunity for clubs to improve and promote cleanliness standards and protocols. Staff can regularly inspect club restrooms, equipment and beyond throughout the day with checklists, looking for specific soils in the high-traffic areas that members assess for cleanliness. Many of the operators explained that keeping a club clean is part of their daily business routine. For example, Craig

says, "Staff are instructed to check all areas for cleanliness when making their rounds." While Langlotz comments, "Every staff person has some responsibility related to cleaning." Both operators agree that regularly scheduled evaluations and surprise audits can help reinforce excellent health club hygiene. A facility's efforts in promoting cleanliness throughout the club can improve its members' perceptions of cleanliness, making profit-center areas cleaner and safer and more attractive to members considering the purchase of additional services.

Health club members look to numerous areas in assessing a club's cleanliness (see Table 2). Importantly, some of these locations contain profit centers that generate important additional revenue streams beyond

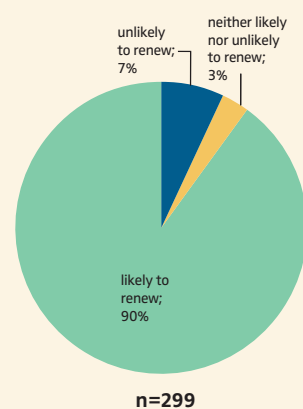
**Figure 7.** Perceived club cleanliness affects member retention.

*How likely are you to renew your current health club or gym membership?*



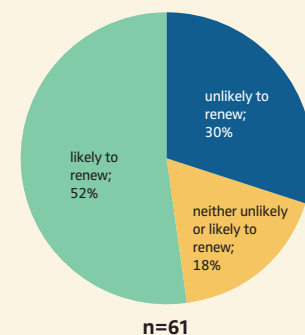
**Figure 8.** A club perceived to be extremely clean increases a member's likeliness to renew.

*How likely are you to renew your current health club or gym membership?*



**Figure 9.** A club perceived to be unclean decreases a member's likeliness to renew.

*How likely are you to renew your current health club or gym membership?*



**Table 2.** Health club members look to numerous areas in assessing a club's cleanliness.

Where do you look when assessing cleanliness of the health club or gym you currently use?  
Which areas of the health club or gym you currently use do you feel is the cleanest and the dirtiest?  
What types of dirt do you encounter in the dirtiest location?

### HEALTH CLUB MEMBERS ASSESS AND CLASSIFY CLUB AREAS:

	Where Members Assess Cleanliness <sup>+</sup>	Cleanest Area <sup>++</sup>	Dirtiest Area <sup>++</sup>	Types of Dirt Reported in Area
Restrooms	75%	10%	15%	water on floor, trash, fingerprints
Workout equipment surfaces	71%	13%	10%	sweat, fingerprints, stickiness
Locker rooms	69%	11%	10%	water on floor, trash, dust
Floors	68%	5%	14%	dust, water on floor, sweat
Equipment areas	65%	17%	6%	sweat, dust
Showers	59%	5%	8%	water on floor, mold, stickiness
Front lobby	44%	20%	6%	dust, trash, fingerprints
Exercise classrooms	39%	8%	3%	dust, sweat, fingerprints
Pool area	31%	5%	3%	water on floor, trash, mold

<sup>+</sup>Multiple mentions allowed; may add up to more than 100%.

<sup>++</sup>Single mention only; responses should add to 100%, however only 9 out of 13 selections are presented here. When comparing data from multiple mentions to single-mention questions, do not compare percentages, but rather the ranking of the response.

monthly membership fees. Attention needs to be paid beyond restrooms, equipment areas and surfaces, club floors, classrooms, showers and locker rooms. Operators must also maintain cleanliness in profit-center areas where clubs provide personal training, group exercise, swimming instruction and other additional services. Although members look to a variety of areas, no single area surveyed was seen as exceptionally clean by the members examined.

## Retaining Members: A Top Priority for Club Management

### The Impact of Cleanliness: Member Retention

Member attrition is an all too familiar issue to club management, however nine out of 10 consumers who perceive their club as extremely clean are likely to renew their membership (see Figure 8), compared to only five out of 10 consumers who perceive their club as unclean (see Figure 9). Maintaining an exceptionally clean club can help a club retain four out of 10 additional members a year.

### Tip the Scale in Your Favor: Prevent Attrition

One out of five members has considered leaving their current club. Despite this

**Table 3.** An unclean environment is one of the common reasons why members consider quitting.

*Why did you consider quitting the health club or gym you currently use?*

Membership fees too expensive.....	29%
Location .....	13%
Value Boosters { Didn't like staff.....	12%
Unclean environment .....	10%
Poor equipment selection .....	10%
Classes .....	10%

*Multiple mentions allowed; may add to more than 100%. Only responses with 10% or more mentions included.*

**Table 4.** When we look into how much money a club might lose if they don't keep a clean club, we estimated the following:

- > Average number of members in clubs = 2,300
- > Average annual membership fee = \$600
- > % of members where unclean environment contributed to decision to leave: 3% or 69 members
- > Estimated dollars lost = \$41,400 per year (69 members x \$600)

**Table 5.** Health club members who perceive their club as extremely clean are more likely to recommend their club to friends and family.

*How likely would you be to recommend the health club or gym you use to a friend or family member?*

### HEALTH CLUB NET PROMOTER SCORE ©

	All (n=600)	Members Perceive Club as Extremely Clean (n=299)	Members Perceive Club as Unclean (n=61)
Members Likely to Recommend	73%	83%	54%
- Members Unlikely to Recommend	10%	6%	28%
= Net Promoter Score	63%	77%	26%

alarming statistic, a club has the power to "tip the scale" in the club's favor. Concern with membership fees was the most often mentioned reason for considering leaving (see Table 3). Clubs can rise to meet this concern by focusing on features that add value to membership, such as hiring qualified staff, keeping a clean environment, and providing a wide selection of equipment and group exercise classes.

### The Bottom Line: Unclean Club=Lost Revenue

While clean clubs win with members, the inverse is also true: The perception of an unclean club can lead to lost revenue. For 10% of members who have recently quit a gym, the unclean environment of the club contributed to their decision to terminate their membership. This segment represents about 3% of a club's overall membership, and when considering the average IHRSA club size of 2,300 members and \$600 in annual membership fees, this can be a loss of more than \$41,000 per year (see Table 4).

### Pass the Word: Members Recommend

An increasingly popular measurement of the positive advocacy of the club is the Net Promoter Score© (NPS). Just as managers now use financial reports to make sure they and their team members are meeting profit goals, they can use this new metric to make sure they are meeting customer-relationship goals. The NPS is the difference between the percentage of people interviewed who are likely to recommend (promoters) and the percentage who are unlikely to recommend (detractors). Most companies in other industries expect a score of between 5% and 10%, while those companies with fast-growing brands (such as YouTube or Apple) have a score between 50% and 80%.

It turns out that health club consumers are excellent advocates of a club. A quick calculation based on responses from all the consumers in this study returns a NPS of 63% (see Table 5). While consumers who perceive their club to be extremely clean have an NPS of 77%, those that perceive their club as unclean compared at an NPS of 26% (see Table 5).

# The Effect of Cleanliness on Usage and Non-Dues Revenue

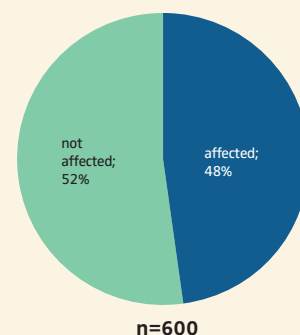
## Effects of Cleanliness on Usage Behavior

Members of health clubs who perceive their club to be extremely clean are 20% more likely to use the club two or more times per week than members who perceived their club as unclean.

Consumers indicated that their usage is affected by the cleanliness of a health club and half of the resulting behaviors were related to avoidance tactics, such as avoiding specific areas, services or amenities, or changing clubs (see Tables 6 and 7).

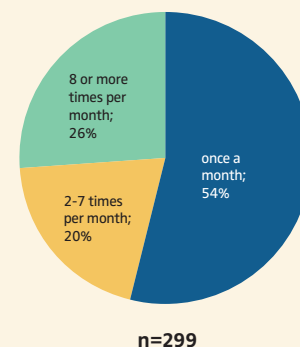
**Figure 10.** Cleanliness affects club usage.

*To what degree does the cleanliness of the health club or gym you currently use affect your use of the club?*



**Figure 11.** Members who perceive the club as extremely clean purchase additional fee-based services per month.

*On average, how many times per month do you purchase the services available at the health club or gym you currently use for an additional fee?*



## Growing the Business: Increasing Non-Dues Revenues

More than four in 10 members indicated that they spend money on additional services (e.g., juice bar, pro shop, personal training, etc.) at the club that are not included in membership dues. Members who rate the club extremely clean purchase 7.23 additional fee-based services per month compared to only 4.26 additional fee-based services per month purchased by members who perceive their club as extremely unclean through somewhat clean (see Figure 11).

**Table 6.** Unclean club leads to behavior change.

UNCLEAN CLUB LEADS TO COMMON AVOIDANCE BEHAVIORS	
	Members' Usage Affected by Club Cleanliness (n=286)
Avoid restrooms, showers, locker rooms, saunas	14%
Avoid dirty equipment/areas	13%
Feel at risk for illness	9%
Don't go to dirty clubs/go to another club	9%
Don't want to work out or go as often	8%
Avoid pool	1%
Avoid childcare	1%



**Table 7.** When the club is unclean, members adapt compensating behaviors, such as:

- > Washing hands more often or using a hand sanitizer
- > Cleaning equipment before use
- > Wearing or using something as a barrier (shoes, sandals, towel, mat, etc.)



# Creating a Clean Club Culture

## Managing Cleanliness

It is important that the philosophy of cleanliness pervades the business, which is a standard that club operators can uphold through proper employee management. It's not essential to hire a special "hit squad" to eliminate slime, grime, mold and mildew, says Stephen Tharrett, a principal at Club Industry Consulting in Highland Village, TX, and co-editor of ACSM's Health/Fitness Facility Standards and Guidelines. "Great clubs have a mission, a vision and a value system," he adds. "If cleaning is a part of that value system, tied in to your mission and vision, you know your club is going to be clean." All employees take part in the upkeep and maintenance of the club; even managers will pick up a towel to wipe up a spot. "It's everybody's responsibility," reports Tharrett.

Tharrett recommends that clubs keep a checklist of cleaning chores and maintenance that must be done daily (See Appendix #1). A supervisor should follow up to make sure that each task has been completed. To keep the process honest, another department head or, in the case of chains, the club maintenance director, should conduct an independent surprise audit once a month and compare the results to the daily checklists.

It is apparent that keeping a club clean is not a simple task. Success requires planning, execution and constant attention to detail. Owners, managers and staff of health clubs were asked to share their perceptions of their club's cleanliness. The following are the key findings.

Areas where club operators and members believe their club is cleanest include the front lobby and equipment sections of the club. Operators must be listening to their members, as this exchange is an important part of the evaluation process for members' sense of cleanliness in a club. Of interest is the difference between areas of evaluation and average "clean score." The front lobby, as an example, is among the most judged areas of the club, but only 20% of members consider it to be the



**Table 8.** Heavy club users of additional services assess the environment in 25% more places. Showers are the number-one place members look to assess cleanliness.

*Where do you look when assessing the overall cleanliness of the health club or gym you currently use?*

*Which of the following services do you participate in for an additional fee at the health club or gym you currently use?*

*Which areas of the health club or gym you currently use do you feel is the cleanest and the dirtiest?*

### FREQUENT CLUB USERS OF ADDITIONAL SERVICES ASSESS CLEANLINESS

Area Assessed	No Additional Services (n=336)	3+ Services (n=54)	3+ Services: Rate Cleanest (n=54)
Showers	57%	80%	4%
Pool area	25%	50%	9%
Childcare area	10%	33%	9%
Food-service area	8%	31%	7%

*Multiple mentions allowed; may add up to more than 100%; only responses with significant difference reported.*

### The Cleanliness Assessment Test: Know Where "Core" Members Look

Members purchasing additional services may be exposed to more areas of the club than members who do not purchase additional services (see Table 8). With knowledge of the 10% risk operators incur in losing members due to an unclean club (see Table 3), maintaining cleanliness is of utmost importance to operators in retaining members who pur-

chase additional services. These terminated members would not only result in a loss of membership revenue, but also income associated with the additional services purchased by such members. Keeping showers, pools, childcare and food-service areas along with other major profit centers impeccably clean is an opportunity and a challenge for club management and staff in efforts to maintain a healthy bottom line.

**Table 9.** A club is only as clean as its members perceive it to be.

Where do you look when assessing the overall cleanliness of the health club or gym you currently use?

Which area of the club or gym you currently use do you feel is the cleanest and the dirtiest?

Which area of the health club or gym do you feel is the cleanest and the dirtiest?

	Where Members Look To Assess Cleanliness <sup>+</sup>	Members Perceive Cleanest Area <sup>++</sup>	Operators Perceive Cleanest Area <sup>++</sup>
Restrooms	75%	10%	11%
Workout equipment surfaces	71%	13%	9%
Locker rooms	69%	11%	13%
Floors	68%	5%	3%
Equipment areas	65%	17%	13%
Showers	59%	5%	4%
Front lobby	44%	20%	23%

<sup>+</sup>Multiple mentions allowed; may add up to more than 100%; top seven responses shown.

<sup>++</sup>Single mention only (shaded gray area); responses should add up to 100%, however only seven out of 13 selections are presented here.

When comparing data from multiple mentions to single-mention questions, do not compare percentages, but rather the ranking of the response.

cleanest area of the club (see Table 9). The majority of members also look to restrooms in order to assess cleanliness, but only 10% of members and 12% of operators view restrooms as one of the cleanest areas. Aligning these areas of review with high clean scores is one opportunity to improve member perception.

### Special Attention Required: Club Areas and Times of Day

Operators and club members perceive common areas of the club to be dirty. The top five areas operators consider dirty are showers, floors, locker rooms, restrooms and equipment (see Table 10). Operators cite the leading reasons for areas being dirty in a club are due to high-traffic and usage of these areas. Operators we interviewed reported the previously mentioned areas, but also highlighted a few more.

Due to high traffic and attention to a clean environment, Melcher comments, “We shut down the kid-zone section two times a day for a total of one and a half hours in order to clean it thoroughly.” Additionally, Kosa

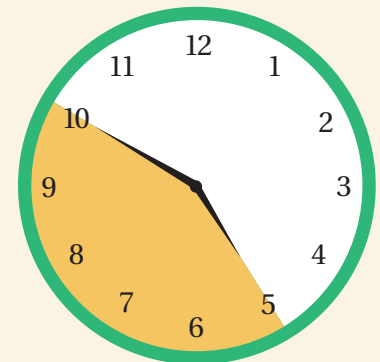
notes that they not only keep a close eye on the cleanliness of the locker rooms, lobby and fitness equipment, but “the outside of the club is important, too, because when members pull up in the parking lot, that is really the first place they see.” Kosa explains, “We have someone who walks the parking lot first thing every morning to make sure it’s clean and presentable.” Michael Mahoney, vice president and general manager of the Midtown Tennis Club, in Chicago, IL, a tennis facility, also makes sure there is a high level of cleaning attention to all club areas, but due to the nature of his business, says, “Our tennis courts have to be immaculate.”

Owners and managers believe that their club is dirtiest or the least clean during evening peak hours and afterward. Nearly seven out of 10 (69%) operators believe their club is dirtiest between 5 and 10 p.m. (see Figure 12).

### Talking Trash: Communicating Club Cleanliness to Members and Staff

Although it is important to understand how operators and members differ and

**Figure 12.** Untimely dirt: period of time club is the dirtiest.



**Table 10.** Top 5 Dirty Club Areas:

- > Showers
- > Floors
- > Locker Rooms
- > Restrooms
- > Fitness Equipment

compare on perceived cleanliness of the club, it is imperative for operators to communicate cleanliness standards correctly and effectively to consumers as well as staff. In efforts to convey and promote cleanliness, more than eight out of 10 operators say there is a protocol in place for cleanliness complaints at their clubs. Langlotz details her club’s procedure: “First, we thank the member for voicing the complaint, because if it is legitimate, other members are seeing it, too. We then try to understand the details of what the complaint is. For example, if the member is on the premises, we will ask them to take us to the dirty area, or if the member is on the phone, we’ll ask for details so we can immediately address it.” Communication through a chain of command was cited by Planet Fitness as the best method. Explains Craig: “If a complaint is made in person, the club manager will address it. Emailed complaints would be received by upper management, who would then be in touch with the club manager.” This method works well for Planet Fitness, especially since the

company ties monthly bonuses for managers to club cleanliness. Protocols may consist of several action points, but the most common one identified in this study is simply to clean up the area cited (see Table 11).

In addition to implementing a cleaning protocol for staff, operators also communicate cleanliness standards to members through five common means (see Table 12). Many use the provision of cleaning products to inform members and staff about cleaning. For example, Melcher stresses, "We focus on providing products throughout the club. There are hand sanitization stations for members everywhere and we have disinfectant wipes all over the club for members to use when wiping down machines."

Club cleanliness is such an integral part of Cherry Hill Health and Racquet Club's operating culture that it is part of their Employee Participation Program. Cherry Hill's general manager, Kosa, explains that the new staff orientation involves basic instructions such as "learning how to use the photocopier, introducing yourself to the manager, picking up pieces of trash inside and outside the club, etc. Actively keeping a club clean is an important part of our club culture."

### Suggestions for Improvement

When asked what can be done to improve health club cleanliness, managers and owners had a few common suggestions.

Implementing a cleanliness policy and procedure and developing a team approach to club hygiene were popular solutions among operators. Operators also considered hiring an employee or contractor to be responsible for maintaining a clean club. Bob Shoulders, owner, Fayetteville Athletic Club in Fayetteville, AR, has a cleaning staff available at all times, as does Melcher, who has a whole department dedicated to housekeeping managed by a full-time housekeeping director. However, both operators stress that all club staff must work as a team and are expected to help out. Melcher explains, "I don't work in the café, but if I see that the trash is full, I will empty it. We expect everyone, regardless of job description, to pitch in." Although these suggestions can be implemented with relative ease, no single approach will accomplish club cleanliness, and there are several other considerations operators must bear in mind as they aspire to promote and maintain an impeccable club (see Appendix #2):

**Know and communicate the reasons for club cleanliness.** Keeping a club clean starts with all owners and staff team members understanding the importance of cleanliness.

**Communicate and revisit cleaning protocols.** One-time training at point of hire may not be enough to emphasize club cleanliness. Regular training or refreshers will drive

**Table 11. Most commonly cited club cleanliness procedures.**

*What steps do you take when receiving a complaint from members about the cleanliness of the health club?*

	Operators <sup>+</sup>
Clean area	91%
Inform member	66%
Tell manager	64%
Document complaint	57%

\*Multiple mentions allowed; may add up to more than 100%.

home the importance of a clean club and ensure that staff members are current on cleaning procedures.

**Conduct frequent inspections.** Inspections are especially important before and after peak times, as staff members can ensure the club is clean before the "workout rush" and clean up right after the club's busiest times. Consistently checking for cleanliness throughout the day will also help maintain cleanliness during overall hours of operation.

**Encourage personal accountability among staff.** Sound staff hygiene practices are just as important as consistent club cleanliness protocols. Staff members can serve as a good example for members. As safety precautions and personal cleanliness initiatives, encourage frequent hand washing and use of instant hand sanitizer.

**Encourage members to be advocates for a clean club.** Use signs and newsletters to tell members about your commitment to a clean club, and invite them to voice any concerns about cleanliness so the issue can be addressed. Reduce the spread of germs by providing instant hand sanitizer at strategic locations throughout your club. Provide the products necessary for members to wipe down equipment after use and create attitudinal norms by encouraging this behavior.

**Table 12. Operators communicate cleanliness standards by providing cleaning products to inform members and staff about cleaning.**

*How does the gym or health club you work for inform members and staff about cleaning?*

### TYPES OF CLEANING INITIATIVES USED FOR MEMBER AWARENESS

	Operators <sup>+</sup>
Spray bottles and paper towels	76%
Signs around workout areas	65%
Disposable wipes near workout areas	60%
Cleaning log detailing by who & when area was cleaned	51%
Member newsletter announcements	34%

\*Multiple mentions allowed; may add up to more than 100%.

## Appendix #1

### General Housecleaning/Maintenance Schedule

The following are examples of how clubs might choose to keep their facilities clean. These are not official guidelines, merely suggestions to keep your club thinking about how best to stay clean. Not all areas may apply to all clubs.

	Daily Tasks	Weekly Tasks	Other Tasks
<b>EXERCISE ROOM</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dry-mop floor/vacuum</li> <li>2. Clean mirrors</li> <li>3. Clean walls</li> <li>*4. Pick up loose articles</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clean light fixtures</li> <li>2. Clean vents</li> <li>*3. Clean stereo</li> <li>4. Wet-mop floor/steam-clean carpet</li> <li>5. Scrub exercise mats</li> <li>6. Scrub exercise balls and other equipment</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Polish and buff floor every 3 to 6 months; replace carpet every 3 to 5 years or as needed</li> </ol>
<b>FITNESS FLOOR</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*1. Vacuum flooring (2x)</li> <li>*2. Pick up loose articles</li> <li>3. Clean mirrors</li> <li>*4. Clean resistance machines</li> <li>*5. Clean free-weight benches and accessories</li> <li>*6. Clean all seat and bench coverings</li> <li>*7. Clean housing/frames of all cardiovascular equipment (bikes, treadmills, ellipticals, etc.)</li> <li>8. Clean glass</li> <li>9. Empty waste containers</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clean vents and light fixtures</li> <li>*2. Silicone or teflon spray guide rods on resistance machines</li> <li>*3. Treat vinyl seats with vinyl protector</li> <li>*4. Check and tighten all bolts, screws, etc.</li> <li>*5. Adjust racing bikes</li> <li>*6. Calibrate equipment</li> <li>7. Wash out waste containers</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shampoo carpet or wash floor every six months</li> <li>*2. Calibrate cardiovascular equipment monthly</li> <li>*3. Perform quarterly service of all cardiovascular equipment</li> </ol>
<b>WET AREAS &lt; LOCKER ROOMS &gt; DRY AREAS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*1. Vacuum carpets (2x)</li> <li>*3. Pick up loose articles</li> <li>4. Clean vanity counters</li> <li>*5. Empty waste containers as needed</li> <li>*6. Empty towel and uniform bins as needed and take to laundry</li> <li>*7. Arrange grooming counters neatly throughout the day</li> <li>8. Clean benches</li> <li>9. Clean mirrors</li> <li>10. Clean dressing rooms</li> <li>*11. Refill amenity containers</li> <li>12. Wash out waste and laundry containers</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clean light fixtures and vents</li> <li>2. Clean tops of lockers</li> <li>3. Polish metal fixtures</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shampoo carpet every three months</li> <li>2. Dry clean curtains in dressing rooms</li> </ol>
<b>WET AREAS &lt; LOCKER ROOMS &gt; DRY AREAS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*1. Clean sink counters as often as needed</li> <li>2. Scrub sinks</li> <li>3. Clean mirrors</li> <li>4. Scrub showers</li> <li>5. Scrub floors</li> <li>6. Refill amenity containers as needed</li> <li>7. Scrub urinals</li> <li>8. Scrub toilets</li> <li>*9. Pick up loose articles</li> <li>*10. Empty waste containers as needed</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clean light fixtures and vents</li> <li>2. Clean dry deck</li> <li>3. Wash out waste containers</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Repair grout in bathrooms and showers annually</li> </ol>
<b>FRONT DESK</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*1. Vacuum (two times)</li> <li>*2. Clean countertops and shelves</li> <li>*3. Dust area</li> <li>4. Wash out waste containers</li> <li>*5. Empty waste containers</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clean light fixtures and vents</li> <li>2. Clean drawers and cabinets</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shampoo carpet every six months</li> </ol>

\*Housekeeping and maintenance responsibilities that fitness floor staff, desk staff and supervisors should do.

### Club Cleanliness: IHRSA's Tips & Tactics To Help Your Members Remain Healthy

Keeping your club clean and protecting your members against illness is a year-round endeavor. However, staying healthy during cold and flu season is sometimes tougher when everyone around you is coughing and sniffing. Research from University of Arizona microbiologist, Dr. Charles Gerba, found a person infected with a cold or flu can leave a trail of viruses on every surface he or she touches at home, in the club, in the office and elsewhere. Dr. Gerba found that some cold and flu viruses can survive on surfaces for up to 72 hours. Maintaining a clean and healthy facility is a benefit to members and employees alike.

#### Revisit the club's existing cleaning and maintenance plan with all key staff and contractors.

- \* Make sure staff are trained and implementing current plan(s).
- \* Revisit the plan to determine what changes, if any, may be required.
- \* Make sure equipment and locker rooms receive interim inspections and cleanings immediately before and after your prime-time traffic periods.
- \* Encourage staff to wash hands regularly with hot water and soap. Provide protective gloves for staff and employees, especially cleaning staff.
- \* Revisit local health codes and regulations to confirm your facility is in compliance.

#### Keep disinfecting wipes and/or spray available in fitness center.

- \* Make sure spray bottles filled with a disinfecting solution, towels and/or disposable disinfecting wipes are available to members upon request to wipe down surfaces and equipment.
- \* Post signage and reminders asking members to clean equipment after use.
- \* Assign staff to periodically inspect/clean equipment and surfaces in locker rooms throughout the day.

#### Make your club's laundry cleaner (if you provide towel and/or laundry service).

- \* Reduce the risk of spreading disease-causing bacteria and viruses by using bleach when washing club towels.
- \* Use the hottest water possible and hottest heat setting on dryers for all laundry.
- \* Avoid overfilling washers. Overloaded washers are less effective.
- \* Avoid allowing used towels to pile up for extended periods of time; research has shown that some types of bacteria can survive and thrive in the laundry.

#### Educate your members.

- \* Remind members that regular exercise improves one's immune system.
- \* Encourage members to report cleanliness concerns to senior staff, and have a system in place for responding promptly to members.
- \* Encourage members to wash hands regularly with hot water and soap.
- \* Interview a local physician, and collect information from online resources such as [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), then share some common tips for protecting oneself in member newsletters or special mailings.





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<sup>1</sup> IHRSA Study. "Why People Quit," 1998.