

The secret life of germs observations and lessons from a microbe hunter

By Philip M. Tierno Jr. Ph.D.

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They're everywhere. Silent and invisible to the naked eye, they're on everything we touch, eat, breathe -- on every single inch of our skin. And despite the remarkable advances of science, germs are challenging medicine in ways that were unimaginable just a decade ago. Due to an explosion of infections never before reported in modern history and a new germ horror story surfacing every week, it's no small wonder that we're frightened -- and that antibacterial soaps are a billion-dollar business. Now, renowned microbiologist Philip Tierno cuts through the media hype with the compulsively readable *Secret Life Of Germs*, revealing exactly where the greatest threats may be hiding.
The Secret Life Of Germs provides an inside view of this fascinating and elegantly ordered microscopic world -- from the common cold, E. coli, and Lyme disease to encephalitis, mad cow disease, and anthrax. It takes readers on a historical survey of the culprits of disease and explores the effect that they -- and the scientists who study them -- have had on our world.
Rising above the common scare-tactic techniques used by many authors, Dr. Tierno's message is an optimistic one. Recognizing that humans are more often than not the main spreaders of disease, he offers numerous protective response strategies -- health and hygiene tips for inside and outside the home, advice on food safety, and pointers on human contact -- to stop the transmittal. Filled with practical and enlightening information, *The Secret Life Of Germs* is an engaging book that will keep readers mesmerized while helping them stay healthy.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Germs are the seeds of life as well as disease, explains Tierno, the New York University Medical Center doctor who helped solve the mystery of toxic shock syndrome. A germ hunter in the truest sense, Tierno spells out how to survive a world so rife with germs that "alien observers might conclude that they are the dominant life form on our planet." His field samplings from high-trafficked New York City locations such as pay phones, taxicabs, public restrooms and even the engagement ring counter at Tiffany's will startle readers, but the author is not an alarmist: his aim is disease prevention, and his method is education. The book opens with a quick history of germ evolution and of human understanding of germs, from biblical injunctions on cleanliness to the modern science of microbiology. It outlines the various ways illness-causing bacteria are transmitted and gives precise instructions for minimizing infection with a bulleted list of "protective response strategies" at the end of each chapter. On subjects of controversy, Tierno tends to fall on the conservative side. He rejects the recent notion that overcleaning is responsible for deficient immune systems and increased childhood asthma (arguing that even the most vigilant housekeeping wouldn't protect kids from all germs), and his warnings against unpasteurized products will be questioned by some. The last third of the book touches on the unexpected role of germs in illnesses such as ulcers and heart disease; antibiotic-resistant bacteria strains; germ warfare; and bacteria-fighting methods of the future. This germ primer brings the bug into focus while setting even the most jittery hypochondriac's mind at ease.

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From Library Journal

The NYU Medical Center director of clinical microbiology and diagnostic immunology shares the story of bacteria, viruses, and prions and their myriad effects on human beings. From toxic shock syndrome to Lyme disease to diarrheal infections of the Third World, Tierno offers a broad overview of the impact of these microbes on the world today. A particularly relevant chapter on germ warfare and terrorism discusses anthrax and other possible bioweapons. Recent books such as Pete Moore's Killer Germs: Rogue Diseases of the Twenty-First Century (Carlton, 2001) have also covered this topic, but Tierno's book includes general information on disease transmission, hand washing, and less glamorous diseases that affect more people than the newsmakers like mad cow disease. An interesting book for popular science readers as well as for students doing reports on disease; recommended for public libraries and consumer health collections. Elizabeth Williams, Fresno City Coll. Lib., CA

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From Booklist
Tierno, whose work on the relationship between toxic shock syndrome and tampons played a major role in solving that deadly problem, has written a fascinating, informative book on the good as well as the bad features of germs. Good? Well, germs are necessary to digesting food, and research is enlisting polio to help treat spinal injuries. Unfortunately, the bad outweighs the good; for instance, 80 percent of germ infections are spread by simple person-to-person contact (proper, frequent hand washing is the best prophylaxis). Tierno cites historic individuals and events to enliven his account of current problems, in particular. Thus we learn that the famous plague of ancient Athens may have been inhalational anthrax--an obvious lead-in to

considering modern terrorists' use of that germ. Reconditioned mattresses and leaky vacuum cleaners are cited as germ hazards, and unfortunately, certain germs are becoming drug-resistant through careless or ill-advised use of antibiotics. Furthermore, germs are also being implicated in diseases not previously associated with them, such as peptic ulcer. An engaging book despite its lack of references. *William Beatty*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jacob Smith:

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Andrew Jefferson:

As a college student exactly feel bored to reading. If their teacher inquired them to go to the library as well as to make summary for some reserve, they are complained. Just minor students that has reading's spirit or real their passion. They just do what the teacher want, like asked to go to the library. They go to presently there but nothing reading really. Any students feel that reading is not important, boring and also can't see

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