

You leave traces of your microbiome everywhere you go

When you touch a surface, you leave behind fingerprints—distinctive swirling patterns of oils that reveal your identity. You might also deposit traces of DNA, which can also be used to identify you. And you leave microbes. You are constantly bleeding microbes into your surroundings, and whenever you touch something, bacteria hop across from your skin.

It's increasingly clear that everyone has [a unique community of microbes](#)—or microbiome—living on their bodies. We share species and strains but the exact roll call varies from person to person. “If you take a collection of people, their microbes will look very different but their genomes will look mostly the same,” says Curtis Huttenhower from the Harvard School of Public Health. So, could the DNA of these tiny variable residents also reveal our identity, just like fingerprints or our own DNA?

A few studies have suggested so. In 2010, Noah Fierer from the University of Colorado found that bacteria [swabbed from keyboards and mice](#) matched those on their owners' skins more closely than those from other people. (The match wasn't quite accurate enough for forensic use, although that didn't stop CSI Miami from running with it.) And last year, [Simon Lax](#) and [Jack Gilbert](#) from the University of Chicago [managed to identify people](#), from a pool of 18 volunteers, based on the microbes they left behind in their homes.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Can The Microbes You Leave Behind Be Used to Identify You?](#)