I work in a group environment where each team member has a cubicle in a common open space.

The atmosphere is very casual. Recently, one female team member took off her sandals (which are common here) and began applying lotion to her feet in her cubicle. One of my co-workers had a comical but negative reaction to this behavior, while the group as a whole was evenly divided as to whether or not it was appropriate. Are there any guidelines for office grooming?

Sandals even show up in summer at The Emily Post Institute. But casual doesn't mean personal grooming is acceptable in one's cubicle, any more than it's acceptable in one's office. Most grooming should be done privately in a restroom. The only exceptions that spring to mind are a quick brush of the hair, an application of hand lotion or, for a woman, a touch-up of lipstick. My litmus test is simple: How would the grooming behavior look if a major client or prospect happened to walk by as it was being done? The sight of you with shoes or sandals off, bending over and applying lotion to your bare feet, doesn't send a very positive image.

Source: Post, Peter. "Etiquette at Work." Boston Globe 12 June 2005.

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