

THE MYTH

“ Hand dryers are more HYGIENIC than paper towels ”



THE REALITY

- Hand dryers are not as effective in removing **bacteria** as paper towels.
- Hand dryers **increase** the numbers of bacteria on hands.
- **Jet air** hand dryers can spread bacteria from hands to the surrounding washroom.
- Users **prefer** paper towels.

The purpose of hand washing is to reduce the number of bacteria and to prevent harmful microbes from entering the body via the hands or indirectly via food. Rinsing your hands is not enough, and drying plays a crucial role in removing bacteria. Studies have shown that using an absorbent paper towel is better than all other drying methods¹.

According to a recent study², people could be exposing themselves to more bacteria by using electric dryers. After washing and drying hands with warm hand dryers, the total number of bacteria can increase on average by up to 254%. Drying with the more modern 'jet hand dryer' is not as hygienic as people might think: the total number of bacteria can increase by up to 42%. However, when washing and

drying hands with a paper towel, the total number of bacteria can be reduced on average by up to 76%. Moreover, a jet hand dryer is capable of blowing bacteria and contaminating other washroom users in the surrounding washroom up to 2 metres away.

People generally prefer drying their hands with paper towels. An Intermetra consumer survey³ confirmed that about 2 consumers out of 3 prefer paper tissue towels and that their key motivation is hygiene.

1. How to wash your Hands – WHO recommendations
2. A comparative study of three different hand drying methods: paper towel, warm air dryer, jet air dryer”
3. Study of the Consumers' Attitudes to Different Handdrying Systems, 2008