

THE MYTH

“Cloth towels are better than **paper** towels for cleaning”

THE REALITY

- **Food-borne illnesses** at home could be reduced by using paper towels.
- Paper and tissue are made of **recyclable materials**.
- Paper and tissue use does not contribute to **deforestation**.

Research¹ has found that multi-use cloths significantly increase the number of bacteria on hands (at least 9 fold on average) due to transfer of bacteria from the contaminated cloth to the hands. Regardless of their use, cleaning, drying, and replacement frequency, bacteria can readily and rapidly establish themselves in fabric. Paper kitchen towels, being disposable and only used once, do not contaminate the hands of users, and are less likely to transmit bacteria and cause cross contamination.

Paper and tissue are made of renewable forest material and are biodegradable. The idea that forests are disappearing due to the usage of tissues is misleading. In Europe 54% of the raw material used for making paper comes from recycled paper. The paper industry also promotes sustainable forest management in Europe with the goal to encourage healthy, useful and enduring

forests that can meet all our different expectations in the future.

Moreover the products' entire life cycle need to be taken into account. Textile products' main environmental impact is during their use, for example during washing/laundry which requires energy, water, and detergents. Land use is an important issue for cotton as well as water use during cultivation, particularly in countries with water scarcity. In fact, growing cotton (out of which a multi-use cloth is fabricated) accounts for 2.6% of the world's yearly water usage², while water supply around the world is becoming scarcer and scarcer.

1. A study of the comparative performance and hygiene of kitchen cloths and paper towels, University of Westminster

2. The water footprint of cotton consumption: An assessment of the impact of worldwide consumption of cotton products on the water resources in the cotton producing countries, 2005