



## **Winter is coming: key tips to help ward off the flu**

### ***Go for paper towels when drying hands to help keep the bugs at bay***

**Brussels, Belgium – October 27, 2016** - Proper hand drying after hand washing is a key step in keeping healthy, particularly during the autumn & winter months when coughs and colds abound. Follow these 5 key tips from the European Tissue Symposium ([ETS](#)) to help keep you and your family healthy this autumn & winter:

#### **1. Wash and dry hands properly when out and about in public places**

Effective hand washing and drying are essential to minimise the risk of infection. While the WHO has guidelines on optimal hand washing, there is no similar guidance on the most effective way to dry hands. The methods in public washrooms are based on either water absorption – paper and textile towels – or water dispersal – jet air and warm air dryers. The body of research over many years shows single-use towels as offering the most hygienic solution.

#### **2. Wash hands thoroughly after a visit to the washroom**

Microbes on hands can be spread via water droplets and may contaminate the washroom and other users. Both viruses and bacteria can survive on the hands for some time if they are not washed and dried effectively: the Influenza virus can survive for 10-15 minutes, herpes virus for up to two hours, the common cold virus for up to one week, and rotavirus, which causes diarrhoea, for up to 60 days.

#### **3. Dry hands with single-use towels to minimise the spread of infection**

Studies<sup>1-3</sup> show that single-use towels spread the lowest number of microbes of all hand-drying methods. Jet air and warm air dryers by contrast can result in the widespread dispersal of microorganisms, both in the air and through potential cross contamination. Air bacterial counts around jet air dryers have been found to be 27 times higher than around paper towels, with bacteria still present in the air well beyond the 15 second drying time: 48% were still airborne after 5 minutes and their presence was still detected after 15 minutes.

#### **4. Don't stand too close to jet air dryers to help avoid the spread of airborne viruses and surface contamination**

Research has studied airborne dispersal, surface contamination and the spread of microbes during and after three different hand-drying methods – jet air dryers, warm air dryers and paper towels. Jet air dryers were found to disperse more microorganisms further and at different heights than the other methods. A study on viral dispersal<sup>1</sup>, also found airborne virus counts to be significantly greater. Jet air dryers dispersed 1300 more virus particles than paper towels and 60 times more than warm air dryers. Combined results after 15 mins across all distances found that jet air dryers dispersed 20 times more viral particles than warm air dryers and 190 times more than paper towels.

#### **5. Be vigilant in keeping young children well away from warm and jet air dryers which are often placed at just the right height to blow microbes directly into their faces**

Children are particularly at risk of contamination as dryers are usually placed at a height that blows air directly into their faces. So, the greatest amount of droplet splattering, and consequently microbe contamination of a person drying their hands with a jet air dryer, is found at the height of the body of an adult and the face of a child.

*Ends*



### **About ETS**

ETS is the European Tissue Paper Industry Association. The members of ETS represent the majority of tissue paper producers throughout Europe and around 90% of the total European tissue production. ETS was founded in 1971 and is based in Brussels. For more information [www.europeantissue.com](http://www.europeantissue.com)

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<sup>1</sup> December 2015 (reference: Kimmitt, P.T. & Redway, K.F. Evaluation of the potential for virus dispersal during hand drying: a comparison of three methods. *Journal of Applied Microbiology*. **120**, 478-486. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jam.13014/abstract>).

<sup>2</sup> *Comparison of different hand-drying methods: the potential for airborne microbe dispersal and contamination* Keith Redway (Department of Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Science and Technology, University of Westminster, London W1W 6UW, UK) and E.L. Best (Microbiology Department, Old Medical School, Leeds General Infirmary, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, Leeds LS1 3EX, UK) <http://europeantissue.com/hygiene/studies/comparison-of-different-hand-drying-methods/>

<sup>3</sup> *Microbiological comparison of hand drying methods: the potential for contamination of the environment, user and bystander*. E.L. Best,<sup>1</sup> P. Parnell,<sup>1</sup> M.H. Wilcox <sup>1,2</sup> – Microbiology Department, Old Medical School, Leeds General Infirmary, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust<sup>1</sup> & University of Leeds,<sup>2</sup> Leeds LS1 3EX, UK. <http://europeantissue.com/hygiene/studies/potential-for-contamination-of-the-environment-study-2014/>