

# Q&A

## questions and answers

**Why do some cities have healthier citizens than others? Hand-hygiene habits could provide part of the answer. Fanis Papakostas, chairman of the European Tissue Symposium, explains why.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **What's the best way to prevent the spread of infection and germs?** As our hands are the number one transmitter of microorganisms, hand hygiene is crucial. Hand-washing with soap and water is the single best way to reduce transmission rates of viruses or gastrointestinal illnesses. But it's not enough. What people often don't realize is that proper hand-drying matters. It is directly correlated with the spread ratio of potentially harmful microbes in society. Microbes can remain on the hands after washing, and damp hands can transmit germs more easily.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Single-use paper towels or electric dryers?** You absolutely get the best results with single-use towels. There have been many independent studies on this topic, comparing the potential for virus dispersion using jet-air dryers, warm hand dryers and single-use towels. When you use any kind of towel to dry your hands, you are doing a much better job. The microbes stick on the paper and end up in the trash. When you use the jet air dryers, the germs get blown and splattered all over the place, as water droplets can stick to the surface of the dryer. Microorganisms can end up on various surfaces of the washroom, on the floor and, unfortunately, on human beings.

\_\_\_\_\_ **What exactly have the studies shown?** During one peer-reviewed study, for instance, Professor Mark Wilcox of Leeds University

discovered that bacterial counts in the air close to jet-air dryers were 4.5 times higher than around warm-air dryers – and 27 times higher compared with using paper towels. This suggests that the jet-air dryers should probably best be kept at least out of health care settings, where the potential to infect vulnerable people is higher.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Regarding the environment, is there also a clear argument for using paper towels?**

In Europe, the tissue paper industry has set its standards and all serious companies have committed to only use certified renewable forestry, recycling fiber or both. Simultaneously they all are in a continuous improvements mode regarding total energy efficiency. Although it is not always easy to calculate the total environmental impact with accuracy. Manufacturing of jet-air devices requires plastic material, metals and energy in use too. What we are absolutely certain about, however, is the hygienic argument. And that is definitely for single-use paper towels. \_\_\_\_\_

