



# EUROPEAN TISSUE SYMPOSIUM

The European Tissue Paper Industry Association

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## Updated Full Consensus statement on hygienic hand drying (Panel meeting 29 January 2020)

- The importance of hand washing with soap to prevent spread of infection is widely accepted by scientists. However, hand drying has received much less attention.
- Some harmful microbes remain on the hands after washing, and these are more easily spread to other surfaces if hands are not dried adequately.
- Proper hand drying completes the hand washing process by reducing the risk of transmission of microbes.
- Generally available hand drying methods in public washrooms are based on either water absorption (single use towels - paper or textile), water evaporation or water dispersal (warm air or jet air dryers).
- There is evidence that hand drying using single use towels rather than electric dryers leads to lower numbers of microbes on hands and in the washroom (both in the air and on surfaces).
- Warm air dryers are less efficient than other methods at drying the hands.
- Jet air dryers are particularly likely to blow bacteria and viruses off the hands and across the washroom. These microbes could contaminate the user, other persons and the air and surfaces both in and outside the washroom. Microbes have been detected in the air for at least 15 minutes after the use of this type of electric dryer.
- In conclusion, the choice of hand drying methods should take into account the risk of contaminating the hands, other individuals, the washroom surfaces and areas outside the washroom particularly in settings where hygiene is especially important, e.g. hospitals, clinics, care homes, schools and food preparation areas.

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