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Great Western News

Paper vs. Hand Dryers

"You might be better off not drying your hands if the only option for drying is an electric hand dryer."

The hand dryer debate is a hot topic. While electric hand dryers can sometimes offer cost savings, using paper towels to dry your hands is far more hygienic. Paper towels reduce costly sick days.

Studies show that drying with paper towels significantly decreases the number of bacteria on the hands, while electric dryers actually increase the bacteria on the hands, and



can also contaminate other washroom users. In fact, in terms of bacterial numbers, it would be better for a washroom user not to wash or dry their hands at all if the only option for drying is an electric hand dryer.

This study, conducted by the University of Westminster in London, found that paper towel drying reduced the average number of bacteria on hands by up to 77 percent. By comparison, electric hand dryers caused bacteria counts to increase, in some cases by over 200 percent. On top of that, the air blowing from hand

dryers can spread bacteria to other areas up to 6 feet away.

The results of this study suggest that the use of air dryers should be carefully considered in locations where hygiene is of paramount importance, and any cost benefit should be carefully weighed against the possible spread of illness.

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