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# You've washed your hands, but how clean are they really?

**U**nlike almost a third of blokes, women tend to wash their hands every time they use a public washroom – but germs are tough to kill.

Hand-dryers might be speedy, but when it comes to hygiene, you can't beat a paper towel. Research by microbiologists at the University of Westminster concluded that jet air dryers cause the greatest spread of microbes, firing up to 59.5 yeast colonies into the air. The humble paper towel fired out just 2.2.

Our hands carry at least 3,000 different bacteria, of which a quarter carry a trace of faeces. And, according to Brian Dewsbery of Sterill – the only hand-dryers proven to kill airborne microbes – “a third of average public wash-room exposed surfaces will be contaminated with coli-form bacteria, making it near impossible for anyone to wash and dry their hands without being contaminated”.

According to Brian, infections that spread include salmonella, E. coli, MRSA and hepatitis A

“One of the most contaminated areas in the washroom are the taps and sink where you ‘clean’ your hands,” he said.

“Regardless of how someone dries their hands, as soon as they touch any of the wash-room surfaces or the door handle to exit the wash-room, they are almost certainly re-contaminating themselves.

“The only solution to clean hands in public washrooms is to sanitise the entire environment by cleaning all the air and all the surfaces.”

Not going to happen, is it? However, there are some steps you can take to cut down the risk of infection.

## THE 30-SECOND RULE

“It is best to wash your hands with hot water for at least 30 seconds, but many washrooms have cold water and soap isn't always available,” says Brian.

## FOLLOW THE ORDER

According to the Global Hygiene Council, you should wet hands first then apply

the soap – not the other way round. Apparently, this helps prevent irritation.

## RUB...

When washing, rub palms together until soap is bubbly, then rub each palm over the back of the other hand. Then rub between your fingers on each hand.

## ...AND KEEP ON RUBBING

Then it's the backs of fingers (when they're in-

terlocked), around each of your thumbs, then both palms together again.

Government guidelines also include “rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa, rotational rubbing backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa”.

And you thought this would be easy...

## RINSE AND DRY

Then you rinse with water and dry. With a paper towel, of course.

### **THEN TURN OFF THE TAP**

Don't fail at the final test: don't turn off the tap when you're done washing, only when you're done drying, and with-paper-towel-in-hand.

After all, a wash-room tap boasts 35 per cent contamination.

### **BE A WOMAN**

"Our recent research revealed 30 per cent of men sometimes don't wash their hands at all," says Keith.

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