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Hand dryers unlikely to spread Covid-19, Microbiologist report confirms

Leading independent microbiologist, Dr. David L Webber, has confirmed that the use of hand dryers in the washroom does not contribute to the spread of the novel coronavirus, following research into Covid-19 transmission.

The report, commissioned by Airdri Ltd, seeks to confirm how the virus is transmitted in the washroom environment, and whether warm air hand dryers are safe to use during the pandemic.

Citing various articles and reports into the spread of microbial contaminants, Dr. Webber confirmed that Covid-19 is spread by droplet transmission and contact with contaminated surfaces, but that the risk of contracting the disease should be no greater in the washroom than in any other communal space.

The report states: "Droplet transmission of coronavirus in the washroom is unlikely as the air is constantly changed, typically 8 to 12 times per hour, which will remove droplets, as will natural ventilation due to the opening and closing of doors. Many smaller washrooms are also fitted with 'air purifiers' to control odours and remove microbial contaminants. The risk of infection is probably greater in the general workspace where coughing and sneezing can release airborne bacteria which can survive up to 15 minutes in droplets and aerosols in the air."

The report also referenced the ongoing debate around the most hygienic hand drying process. The findings showed that despite claims made by paper towel manufacturers to suggest that hand dryers contribute to the spread of viruses in the washroom, the reality is that both paper towels and warm air hand dryers offer a hygienic way to dry hands.

Dr. Webber adds: "In a small washroom, a single operation of a typical hand dryer would only disturb 2% to 3% of the volume in the air and is unlikely to contribute to the spread of microbes."

The report concludes that the most effective way to reduce the risk of infection in the washroom is to wash and dry hands effectively, using soap and hot water and either paper towels or a hand dryer, backing up the advice issued by the World Health Organisation to tackle Covid-19.

Outlining the most robust approach to handwashing during the Covid-19 crisis and beyond, Dr. Webber suggests the following four-step process:

1. Ensure hands are correctly washed for at least 20 seconds
2. Dry hands thoroughly (10 seconds of drying with a paper towel or jet air dryer, or up to 40 seconds using a warm air hand dryer)
3. Do not touch any surfaces after drying hands, and if you do,
4. Use a hand sanitiser when outside the washroom.

Trudi Osborne, Marketing Manager at Airdri said: "Since the Covid-19 crisis hit the UK, we have seen many articles questioning the cleanliness of hand dryers and their impact on the spread of the disease in the washroom setting. Therefore, we were keen to secure some



hard facts from an expert to confirm our belief that hand dryers are safe to use during the pandemic.

“We welcome Dr. Webber’s findings and continue to urge washroom users to not only wash their hands thoroughly, but also dry them properly, using either a paper towel or hand dryer, as recommended by the World Health Organisation. This will ensure any trace of infection is removed from the hands.”