

Considerations for Safe Use of Public Laundry Facilities

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Millions of people in the United States use public laundry facilities, also called laundromats. It is important to take steps to ensure the safe handling of clothing items while using a laundromat. It is in your family's best interest to consider ways to limit exposure to germs and viruses while using laundromats. Please consider the following guidelines to ensure the safety of yourself and your family while at the laundromat.

Laundromat Cleanliness and Upkeep

Ask the laundromat management about their procedures for sanitizing the washers and dryers. Each machine should be wiped with a sanitizer between customers. Chlorine bleach should not be used to sanitize the laundry equipment as it is harsh and can damage many clothing items.

Try to schedule your use of the public laundry facility during off-peak times if possible, and inquire about limits on customers within the facility at one time.

Contact the laundromat to ask for information on its disinfecting procedures.

Minimizing Your Exposure to Contaminants in the Laundromat

To minimize your time in the laundromat, sort and pretreat your items prior to leaving your home. It is best to proceed as if the laundry facility has been exposed to germs and viruses and minimize your



contact with surfaces, practice social distancing and be mindful of touching the following:

- Countertops
- Buttons on the machine
- Handles to open and close the machine
- Buttons on any change machine
- Handles on the entrance door to the laundromat

Quick Tips

- **Leave The Kids At Home!** Refrain from bringing a large family group to the laundromat to minimize exposure to pathogens.
- **Multitask!** While dirty laundry is in the washing machine, disinfect your basket or laundry hamper to prevent cross-contamination.
- **Don't Fold And Fluff!** To minimize contact with multiple surfaces in the laundromat, repack your clean laundry into your freshly cleaned laundry hamper and fold and fluff at home!
- **More Detergent Is Not Better!** Extra detergent will not completely rinse, leaving excess suds that enable dirt and grime to remain trapped inside the fabric. The right amount of soap will properly clean, then be rinsed from the clothing.
- **Protect Yourself!** If laundering clothes from an ill person, wear gloves to minimize your exposure to illness.



Ensuring Cleanliness of Household Linens and Towels When Using Public Laundry Facilities

We are exposed to the same bed linens over a long period each week and usually do not change them each day as we do with clothing.

It is recommended that bed linens be changed and washed once a week. If there is sickness in the home, bed linens should be changed and laundered more frequently.

To make sure bed linens are cleaned properly, don't overload the washer! Ample room is needed for the dislodged dirt and grime to disperse in the water during the wash cycle. A full load for a regular washing machine might be simply one queen set: fitted sheet, flat sheet and pillowcases.

Household towels, including kitchen and bath towels, should be washed in hot water. Kitchen and bath towels come in contact with food particles and skin cells, respectively, that are a haven for harmful microbes.

High-capacity washing machines wash more items per load, at a higher price. However, if you have to launder towels and bed linens for multiple family members, using high-capacity washing machines will reduce your time in the laundromat.

Sources

CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/disinfecting-your-home.pdf> Downloaded April 7, 2020.

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