Consider the public restroom. We may be a bit concerned about how sanitary it is, but when nature calls while we are out and about, the facility is a welcome sight. But how do we utilize public restrooms with minimum risk to our health? Automatic flush toilets, no-touch water faucets, electric hand dryers, and automatic paper towel dispensers all represent a significant leap forward in public health protection.

For one thing, these innovations are a far cry from the recirculating cloth roller towels of the past.

Nevertheless, new technologies raise new questions. For example, when given a choice of using disposable paper towels or an electric hand dryer, which is the better choice?

In poorly serviced public restrooms there may be no hand-drying options provided. In that case, your only choice could be to wipe your hands on your clothing or wave them about in the air. But drying your hands thoroughly may be more important than you think.

That’s because wet hands transfer pathogens to other surfaces more efficiently than dry hands.

We evaluated these options for hand drying in public restrooms, listing the advantages and limitations of each so you can decide for yourself.
Whether you prefer paper towels or an automatic hand dryer, good hand hygiene starts with attention to hand washing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, proper hand washing with soap and water is one of the most important steps you can take to help avoid getting sick and spreading illness to others. If your hands are thoroughly cleaned, spreading pathogens by various drying methods is less of a concern.

*What’s your public restroom hand-drying strategy?*

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