Dear Alice,

Some of my family members insist on using the same towel for drying themselves perhaps 2 or more times before washing the towel. They claim that dirt and germs are washed off during bathing and that using the same towel and rehanging it to use several more times is not unhealthful.... I disagree and say the towel then becomes bacteria infested and when they re-use it to dry themselves that they are putting this bacteria on their bodies. Thanks for looking at this.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Before you spend all of your free time in the laundromat, consider that your family members may be on to something. Washing your bath towel after each use is a way to keep bacteria at bay, but it is not completely necessary. Although you’re right that some bacteria may live on your towel, it’s probably not enough to cause any health problems, and you will save energy (and time! and quarters!) if you reuse bath towels. A good compromise is to wash your bath towel after several uses since storing towels in humid places (like bathrooms) can create a bacteria-friendly environment. Different seasons and climates may also make towels more susceptible to bacteria and odor.

Tips to consider:

- Hang your towels in a way that maximizes drying and keeps the towel as open as possible? consider using a towel bar instead of a hook.
- Keep your towel hanging until you wash it? allowing a towel to sit for days in a hamper can spread funk to surrounding clothes.
- If possible, keep the bathroom door open so air can circulate.
- Follow the instructions for care on your towels? with the many variations of towels (from bargain to luxury) come different suggestions for temperatures, detergents, etc.
- Get off to a fresh start? make sure your towel is completely dry before leaving the dryer.

The bottom line is that if you frequently wash your towels and store them so they dry properly between uses you should be in fine shape. Shower on!

Alice!

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