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## Does washing clothes in cold water kill germs

May 27, 2010 -- Your dirty laundry may actually be even dirtier after you wash it. That's because experts say washing machines are teeming with bacteria that find their way onto your clothes -- and then onto you.Our smallest items -- our undergarments -- are the biggest culprits because of the presence of fecal matter and the different types of bacteria it can carry.Charles Gerba, a professor of microbiology at the University of Arizona, has done extensive research on the germs that fester in our washing machines."If you wash a load of just underwear, there will be about 100 million E. coli in the wash water, and they can be transmitted to the next load of laundry," Gerba said."There's about a tenth of a gram of poop in the average pair of underwear," he added.Fecal matter can carry a number of different germs, including the hepatitis A virus, norovirus, rotavirus, salmonella and E. coli.Philip Tierno, a professor of microbiology and pathology at the New York University School of Medicine and author of the book, "The Secret Life of Germs," said bacteria from the skin, such as staphylococcus, can be found on clothing and towels. Detergents Are Not The AnswerYou may have been relying on your detergent to get rid of all the dirt and germs, but if you're not using bleach or very hot water, you're not killing the bacteria -- they're getting on your hands and staying in the washing machine."Most of the hot water people use is not hot enough. You need water that's between 140 and 150 degrees to kill germs," said Tierno.If you're using cold water, Gerba recommends washing your hands after you handle wet clothes, especially if you're washing children's clothes.Getting Rid of Germs in LaundryChildren's clothes, especially their undergarments, tend to carry a lot more things," he said.Using the right concentration of bleach will kill the bacteria, but using bleach isn't always appropriate, such as when you wash lingerie or colored clothing."If you can't use chlorine bleach, you may want to resort to something like Clorox 2 because it has peroxide," said Tierno.Another option is to periodically clean your washing machine with bleach and water without any clothing in it -- just let the machine go through its regular cycle.One of the most effective germ-killers is the sun, so scientists say avoid the dryer altogether and let your clothes dry in the sun."The ultraviolet radiation kills germs," said Tierno. "It's just as effective as bleach," he added.Germs Are All AroundBut a washing machine is just one of many germ-laden objects that you may encounter in a given day. Handrails, ATM's, refrigerator handles and telephone handsets are among the others.Gerba added that day care centers and young children's classrooms are also full of germs, as are airplane toilets."You've got about 50 people using the same toilet, and it's sometimes hard for people to wash their hands because they don't fit in the sink," he said.Airplane water also got a thumbs-down from Gerba and Tierno."Plane water is very contaminated," said Tierno. "Things aren't cleaned properly, so there's a biofilm on the water."Despite the huge number of germs you may come into contact with during the day, most of what the ones you'll encounter are harmless."Of the more than 60,000 kinds of germs, only one to two percent of them are potentially pathogenic," Tierno said. Clean Hands and Common Sense Are KeyAnd unless you have open wounds, as long as you wash your hands, you won't get sick. But the key is to wash your hands the right way.According to health experts, that means wetting your hands with water, washing all surfaces of the hands -- including between the fingers and underneath the nails -- rinsing and then repeating the cycle all over again.If you use a public bathroom to wash your hands, Tierno recommends you avoid touching faucets or door handles."Use paper towels to open or close faucets and doors, then use the towel to open the door, and then throw the towel in the trash outside the bathroom," he said.Gerba agrees that faucets are probably the dirtiest part of public bathrooms, but says door knobs aren't as dirty because people tend to wash their hands and then open the door.In the event you can't get to a sink, you should use gel hand sanitizer that's at least 62 percent alcohol. Rub it all over your hands for about 15 to 20 seconds and then let it dry.As long as you use common sense and are aware of all the bacteria that could be around you, can easily avoid getting sick."You don't have to live in a bubble. These are just easy ways to prevent unnecessary illnesses," said Tierno. Is it better to mop with cold water or hot water? Is it OK to wash sheets in cold water? Should bath towels be washed in hot water? What temperature is best to wash towels? Can you use a washing machine with just cold water? How do you make hard towels soft again? What wash should I put towels on? How do hotels keep their towels so white and soft? Can you kill germs with cold water? Is Vinegar a disinfectant? Do clothes get clean when washed in cold water? Can vinegar replace laundry detergent? Does vinegar kill germs in laundry? How do you kill bacteria on clothes? When bacterial or viral infections hit, the first thing you might think of is getting your laundry washed. However, just putting the clothing in the wash isn't going to get rid of those germs. You have to disinfect laundry to get it truly clean. Learn how to disinfect your laundry using bleach, vinegar, peroxide, borax and even Pine-Sol. How do you kill germs in the laundry? When it comes to getting your clothes clean, it's all about what you're cleaning. You're going to take different measures for white clothes then you will for colored clothes. And always follow your clothing labels. You might think that you can throw your clothes in the wash and germs are gone right? It might seem like all that agitating would kill them but that's just not true. You have to make sure that you wash your clothing in the right temperature and using the right materials. For white clothing, this means that you'll: Wash your clothing in hot water that is 140 degrees. Use laundry detergent and bleach. Place clothes in the dryer for at least 45 minutes. Hot water is best for disinfecting clothes. But when it comes to some clothing, you'll need to use cold water to wash delicate and bright, rich colors. Therefore, you have to think of alternative ways to kill germs that are living on your clothes. And bleach is not an option for colored clothing. When it comes to washing colored clothes, you'll: Use the warmest water allowed on your labels. Use laundry detergent with bleach alternative. Dry for at least 45 minutes. Certain materials can't be washed in the washer like wool, silk or dry clean only clothing. In this instance, you might try spot cleaning the fabric with a 2:1 mixture of water and isopropyl alcohol. Spray the mixture on a white cloth and gently brush down the clothing. However, for rich colored fabrics, you'll want to test this on a discrete area first. Fabrics like wool and silks should be hand washed and line dried in the sun to help remove germs. Specific items might also be steamed to remove viruses and bacteria. When it comes to how to disinfect your laundry in cold water, bleach is a go-to. However, bleach can be a pretty harsh chemical. Those looking for a bleach alternative can find several out there. Vinegar has acetic acid, which can kill viruses and bacteria. For a bit of added disinfectant and deodorizer in your clothes, you can add ½ cup of white vinegar to the rinse cycle. Not only will this help to kill those pesky germs, but it also works as a fabric softener. This can work for whites and colored clothes. You might only think of peroxide when you have a cut, but it works great for your laundry to kill germs. Add a cup of peroxide to white clothes after the washer has filled and before the cycle starts. For light or pastel-colored clothing, add 1 cup of peroxide to the bleach dispenser after the washer has filled to disinfect colored clothing. Given the bleaching properties of peroxide, it's important to test the clothes before adding peroxide to your colored load. Additionally, never pour peroxide directly onto your colored clothing. Does borax disinfect laundry? Yes, it does. To use borax to disinfect, you'll want to fill the washer with laundry and hot water. You'll then add ½ cup of borax to the washing cycle. You can also use a homemade detergent with borax. When it comes to the cleaning power of borax, it works best with hot water so make sure your clothing can be washed on hot. In a pinch, you can also use pine oil, like Pine-Sol, to disinfect laundry. This should not be used on specialty fabrics. To use pine oil in the laundry, you'll add one cup to the washer after it has filled. Make sure that it is 80% pine oil or it will be ineffective. Remember, a subtle smell will remain. It should also not be used for those that have sensitive skin or allergies. It seems impossible, but your washing machine gets bacteria and germs in it too. So, it is important to clean your washing machine every once in a while to ensure that all those bacteria and viruses are blasted. To clean your washer: Add 2 cups of peroxide. Run it through a cycle using the hottest water. Add 1½ cups of baking soda. Run it through another cycle. Fill a spray bottle with straight vinegar. Spray the lid and wipe down the rubber areas. Wipe it out. When it comes to cold and flu season, it is important to disinfect your laundry to prevent the spread of diseases. It's also helpful in keeping those bacteria like staph and salmonella in check. Now that you know how to clean your laundry, it's time to hit the laundry room. © 2021 LoveToKnow Media. All rights reserved. Many of us were taught that washing clothes in warm or hot water was the only way to get them clean and get rid of stains. It turns out, however, washing them in cold water is just as effective and - bonus! — saves money.According to a 2019 American Cleaning Institute survey, 52 percent of Americans are now using cold water for their main wash cycle. Only 14 percent tend to use hot water, and 32 percent warm water. Cold water washing is definitely on the rise. For example, in 2005, the New York Times reported just 30 percent of loads were done in cold water.What Changed?One factor is that washers have evolved and are much better at cleaning than those produced over 15 years and more ago. Due to U.S. government requirements, newer models are more water and energy efficient, with wash temperatures set lower, and a wider range of options provided for specific laundry needs. The average wash temperature has fallen about 20 degrees over the last two decades to meet new efficiency standards.The most efficient washers today are Energy Star certified — Energy Star is a program promoting energy efficiency run by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Dept. of Energy — and they use around 45 percent less water and 25 percent less energy than non-certified machines. These energy-saving requirements meant laundry detergents also had to improve to be effective at the lower temperatures. Tide Coldwater was the first cold water detergent to be introduced in 2005, and since then other detergent manufacturers have launched their own cold-water brands.Today, because of the chemical advancements in detergent formulation, most modern detergents are effective regardless of the temperature. However, for washing in lower temperatures, such as 60°F, the cold-water detergents still do the best job, and are a better choice for most cold-water wash settings. Liquid detergent is recommended, though, because powdered formulas may not properly dissolve in cold water.What to Wash in Cold WaterCold water is generally regarded as being between 60 and 80 degrees F. According to Consumer Reports experts, almost anything washed in this temperature range is fine as long as you have a good detergent and machine. Bright, colorful fabrics. Cold water prevents colors from running and minimizes shrinkage. Delicates, such as lace, washable silk, pantyhose, wools, or antique fabric. Place your delicates in a mesh washing bag and use the machine's gentle cycle and lowest spin cycle.Synthetic fabrics, such as nylon, spandex, polyester, rayon blends, wool/synthetic mixtures, and wool/polyester blends. White cotton, underwear, sheets, pillow cases, towels — in fact, most clothes and other items you can safely put in a washing machine. Heavily soiled clothing. Do a pre-wash cycle with cold water, and a "heavy soil" cycle for longer washing and multiple rinses. Work-out or exercise clothing, whether made of cotton or synthetic materials (hot water can damage the elasticity of the fabric and set sweat stains). Because these items can retain odors, soak them in half a cup of white vinegar mixed with cold water for at least an hour before washing. This breaks down the sweat stains and removes odors. Alternatively, you can do a machine pre-rinse, which is especially good for synthetic materials. Cold water is excellent for the rinse cycle for all types of loads.What to Wash in Warm or Hot Water In some cold-weather states, the winter temperature of the water entering a house, and used in washing machines for cold washes, drops below 40°F. Detergents may not perform well at these temperatures, and in certain geographical areas it may be necessary to use warm or hot water to get clothes clean in the winter.However, if you're in this situation, upgrading to a newer machine with automatic temperature control (ATC) will solve this problem. The ATC feature will automatically add some hot water to the cold cycle. Items that need sanitizing (for instance, if someone in the house is ill with a contagious disease, or for dirty cloth diapers). A normal hot water cycle isn't hot enough to disinfect — you have to have a machine with a sanitizing cycle, which uses a built-in heater to raise the temperature high enough and long enough to kill germs. During the sanitizing cycle water is heated to a temperature of at least 165°F. You can also sanitize clothes by putting them in a dryer at a hot setting for 45 minutes.Follow the Label!The Label!s always best to follow the sewn-in care instructions on the label for any clothing or other washable items. For water temperature, the labels in the American care labeling system show a tub with a wavy line representing water. Inside this tub you'll either find a number or dots. The number represents the highest water temperature you should be using. Dots represent the following temperatures:1 dot for 30°C or 65°F-85°F2 dots for 40°C or 105°F3 dots for 50°C or 120°F4 dots for 60°C or 140°F5 dots for 70°C or 160°F6 dots for 95°C or 200°FFurther Benefits of Cold-Water WashingSaves Money. Since 90 percent of the energy needed to run a washer is used for heating water, running cold water wash and rinse cycles results in significant savings. According to Consumer Reports, a household saves anywhere from \$60 to over \$200 a year (the average American family does about 300 loads of laundry a year — Energy Star). The National Resources Defense Council states that even using the "warm" setting cuts the energy use in half. Clothes Last Longer. There's less fading and shrinking, and clothing items keep their shape longer when washed in cold water.Less Wrinkling. Makes ironing easier and faster.Helps the Environment. By decreasing the energy needed to heat water, the use of cold water wash and rinse cycles reduces carbon emissions. The average family, by doing laundry in cold water for a year, is therefore saving greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to driving about 1,000 miles.Best for getting out stains. Cold water washing removes many stains, including chocolate, mud, ice cream, blood, sweat, red wine, grass, tea, ring around the collar, and makeup smudges, regardless of the fabric. Hotter temperatures can actually help set stains into clothing. It's best to pre-treat and soak stains in cold water before washing.Whatever settings you use for your wash, the one thing you cannot do without is a properly operating washing machine. For repairs and maintenance to all of your major appliances, call the pros at C&W Appliance Service at (214) 358-1496 or (855) 358-1496 or send us an online service request. does washing your clothes in cold water still kill germs, will washing clothes in cold water kill germs, does washing clothes in cold water kill germs



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