

# Fast Facts About Laundered Towels

Because it is common practice that foodservice towels are laundered with towels from other industries, **they can become contaminated with heavy metals and other dangerous residues during the laundering process.**

## 13 MILLION

number of pounds of hazardous contaminants discharged into public water systems annually from industrial laundries

A **2011 Gradient Study** found:

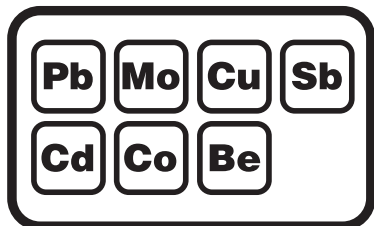


## 100%

of laundered towels tested contain toxic heavy metals

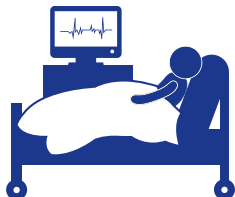
Workers using laundered towels daily **may be exposed to excessive levels of:**

- Lead
- Cadmium
- Molybdenum
- Cobalt
- Copper
- Beryllium
- Antimony



**Prolonged exposure to heavy metals** is associated with:

- Nervous system damage
- Reproductive problems
- Cancer
- Skin disease
- Kidney disease



Towels can get used in **UNINTENDED WAYS:**



## 55%

of workers use laundered towels on bare skin three or more times a day

## 36%

take laundered towels home



## 54%

say co-workers take laundered towels home

## 18%

use them for personal hygiene and first aid



When workers are **presented with the risks** posed by laundered towels:



## 78%

of workers believe laundered towels should be banned if not **100%** free of hazardous materials after laundering



## 86%

would raise the issue with a manager



## 93%

would take greater safety precautions



## 71%

believe employers have a duty to keep workers informed about safety issues related to laundered towels



## 87%

would ask for safer alternative

Sources: Gradient Study, 2011, *Evaluation of Potential Exposure to Metals in Laundered Shop Towels* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3877860/>  
 Harris Interactive Survey, 2011; <https://www.pnnews.com/news-releases/most-manufacturing-workers-want-to-ban-shop-towels-that-retain-toxic-heavy-metals-after-laundering-139964653.html>  
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