

June 2015 EnergyWiseSM Tip: Laundry

Washing and drying laundry uses more energy than you may think. Not only are you running the machines, many times you are also using warm or hot water from your hot water heater.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the average household does about 400 loads of laundry a year. Of those, 49 percent run with warm water, 37 percent with cold water, and 14 percent with hot. Depending on your energy source for making hot water, the average energy cost per load is about \$1. It does not take long to see that this common chore provides a great opportunity to use energy more wisely and save on monthly energy bills.

Here are some ways you can reduce your energy costs while getting the wash done:

1. Use cold water. According to ENERGY STAR® almost 90 percent of the energy consumed by the washing process is used to heat water. You can save a lot of energy by washing your clothes in cold water. Cold-water washing also keeps colors bright, reduces wrinkling, and will not set stains. Although you may find that regular detergent is sufficient, try out cold-water detergents that are specifically formulated to work in cooler temperatures.
2. Run a full load. Your clothes washer will use about the same amount of mechanical energy, regardless of how full it is. If you do not run a full load, be sure to set the water level for the amount of laundry you are running.
3. Use the washer's energy-saving settings. Be sure to start with the appropriate wash cycle for the fabrics being laundered and do not wash for longer than needed. Some loads only need 10 minutes of washing. Avoid the excessively hot "sanitary cycle," but do choose the "high spin" option to remove more moisture at the end and cut down on drying time.
4. If you are in the market for a washing machine, get one with the ENERGY STAR label. ENERGY STAR washing machines use 37 percent less energy and 50 percent less water than regular washers.
5. Soak heavily soiled items before washing, and rub collars or other stains with household soap. There's nothing worse than having to repeat a wash because stains didn't come out.
6. Use the dryer's energy-saving settings. Select low temperature for delicates and medium for most clothes. Choose auto-dry instead of timed-dry to prevent over-drying. Use a cycle that includes a cool-down period, sometimes known as a "permanent-press" cycle. In the last few minutes of this cycle, cool air, not heated air, is blown through the clothes completing the drying process with less electricity and saving you money.
7. Clean the lint filter after each dryer load to improve air circulation and reduce drying time. Periodically, use the long nozzle tip on your vacuum cleaner to remove the lint that collects inside the lint screen slot. Purchase a lint trap vacuum attachment if you cannot get your vacuum's nozzle into the trap. In addition, inspect your dryer vent a couple of times a year to ensure it is not blocked. This will save energy and may prevent a fire. Manufacturers recommend using rigid venting material -- not plastic vents that may collapse and cause blockages.

8. Consider a clothesline or drying rack. Drying clothes outside on a line or inside on a drying rack saves about 40 cents per load. Note that it is often recommended that fabrics like wool be laid flat to dry. Plus, line-dried clothes receive less wear and tear and will be static free without the use of dryer sheets.
9. Dry towels and heavier cottons in a separate load from lighter-weight clothes, since different materials, fabric weights, and garment sizes will require different amounts of time to dry.

Your local utility and Nebraska Public Power District want to help you make the most of your energy dollar and reduce your laundry costs. For more ideas on how you can make your home or business EnergyWiseSM, along with possible energy efficiency financial incentives, contact your local utility or visit www.nppd.com.