

**Family Living Focus**

**Nancy Wiker**  
Lancaster Co.  
Extension Agent



**Laundry Balls - What Are They All About?**

Just what are these laundry disks, balls, globes, rings, cubes, stones, and crystals all about? These new laundry devices claim to let you do away with laundry detergent forever. There are several versions of the product on the market that challenge the need to use detergent when washing clothes. For \$30-\$80 you can help save the environment by not using harsh detergents and fabric softeners, save money you would spend on laundry products, and extend the life of your clothes. These disks or balls also claim to be antibacterial, hypoallergenic, sanitize clothes and last from 500-2500 washes.

More than 20 variations of this product, which activates the "natural cleansing power" of water, are now on the market. According to product information, some contain "electrically-charged" ceramic beads that lower the surface tension of the

water, making it better able to penetrate the fabric. Others use the concept of "structured water" that causes water molecules to disassociate because of "far-infrared electro magnetic waves". Still others use copper and silver to release electrons that produce ionized oxygen, which breaks up dirt and organic compounds.

This device was tested in several laboratory settings including Maytag, Whirlpool and Consumer Reports. Several cleaning combinations were used. Each combination was tested several times. In the first group, stained items were washed in water only, the next combination was stained clothing and the laundry ball. In the third group an enzyme product was added along with the laundry ball and clothes. In the last combination only liquid laundry detergent was added to the dirty clothes.

The findings from the tests indicate that when used alone,

the laundry ball produced the same results as washing with plain water. When enzymes and boosters were added to the laundry ball wash load the results were a little better than water-only wash. Washing with the liquid detergent clearly gave better results than any other cleaning agent.

The University of Minnesota did both field tests and laboratory tests on the ceramic laundry disk. In laboratory tests, the disc only wash showed poor cleaning, however, the wash load using the disc plus one teaspoon of detergent in the wash produced the same results as the regular detergent wash. In field tests, the disc plus a laundry aid (pre-treatment) performed as well as detergent plus a laundry aid. Nearly half of the participants in the field tests were as satisfied with the discs as they were with their standard laundry detergent. Overall, the reusable ceramic laundry disc performed better than water but not as well as detergent.

As for the claims of structured water, far-infrared electro magnetic waves, and electrically charged ceramic beads, Dr. Hugh Cartwright of Oxford University, England, comments that the claims "sound implausible... and are advertising hype."

Washing with water only will remove much of the solid granular dirt in clothes due to mechanical action. It should be noted that it may take several

**Figure Out Your BMI**

**WILLIAMSPORT** (Lycoming Co.) — You've probably been hearing a lot about body mass index (BMI) lately. This is a method to determine whether or not your weight poses any health risk.

BMI is a measurement based on your weight and height (kilograms/meters) and is highly correlated with body fat. The height and weight calculation help to determine whether you are at a healthy weight or have too much body fat.

Information from the Lycoming County Extension office includes instructions on how to figure out your BMI.

To figure your BMI, multiply your weight in pounds by 705, divide by your height in inches and then divide again by your height.

For example: If you weight 150 pounds and you are 5 feet 4 inches tall, (64 inches) you would do the following: 150 pounds X 705 = 105,750 divided by 64 inches = 1,652, divided by 64 inches again = 25.8 or a BMI of 26.

weeks for the residual detergent to wash out of clothing. Most of the product information indicates that pre-treatment or a little laundry detergent is needed for grease, oil, and extra dirty items. Water does not dissolve oil-based stains, thus over time, graying and yellowing will occur. Some product information indicated the need for a little brightener such as borax.

- Calculating your BIM:
1. Multiply your weight in pounds by 705.
  2. Divide by your height in inches
  3. Divide by your height again.

The result is your BMI  
In general the risk of disease, especially heart disease, diabetes and several common cancers is lowest for BMI between 21 and 25, then it increases slightly between 25 and 27, substantially between 27 and 30 and dramatically for scores over 30.

Recent statistics show that 33 percent of adult Americans have a BMI of 27 or higher, resulting in more than 300,000 lives lost annually due to weight-related illnesses.

Losing and maintaining as little as 5 percent of initial body weight is likely to result in significant health improvements for you.



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