

Reusable Bag Tips

A recent study by the American Chemistry Council shows reusable bags may be in contact with bacteria. When cared for properly, reusable bags are a **100% safe and healthy** way to reduce bag waste and provide a cleaner, greener environment. Simply following these tips to properly clean and care for your reusable bags will ensure that you avoid cross-contamination with harmful bacteria that could result in illness.

Wash Your Reusable Bags Regularly

Many bags are machine washable and dryable. Always follow the cleaning instructions on the reusable bags. If there are no instructions, simply follow these guidelines to help determine how to properly wash your bags.

Machine wash in warm water:

- Cotton reusable bags
- Hemp reusable bags
- Screen printed or dyed bags – wash in cold water the first few times
- Some polyester reusable bags

Hand wash in warm, soapy water:

- Non-woven polypropylene and recycled PET reusable bags
- Nylon or poly-nylon bags

Spot cleaned with a wet cloth or disinfectant spray cleaner:

- Non woven polypropylene bags
- Laminated reusable bags (either laminated polypropylene or laminated recycled PET)
- Any other non-fabric reusable bags

Tip: *Cleaning with lemon juice or a vinegar solution is a natural way to kill bacteria*

Drying tips:

Most machine washable bags can be tumble dried on low in your machine. For reusable bags that require hand-washing, it's important to let them air dry completely, both inside and out. Complete air drying is important to ensure moisture isn't trapped that can lead to mold.

Proper Storage:

Store your reusable bags in a clean, dry location. Though it seems convenient, do not store your reusable bags in the trunk of the car. The hot, airless atmosphere of the trunk can be a breeding ground for bacteria, in addition to the other dirty items that can come in contact with your bags. Remember to treat your reusable bags as you would treat the other food storage containers in your kitchen – **regular washing, drying and proper storage prevents the spread of bacterial!**

Dedicate Your Reusable Bags

Grocery Only

Though it's convenient to use your reusable bags for other purposes – e.g. for gym clothes or as a diaper bag - it's critical to avoid multi-purposing your reusable bags. Bacteria from dirty clothes or diapers can be transferred to food items if the same reusable bags hold food and non-food items.

Separate Kinds of Food in Separate Bags

Designate specific bags to hold **meat, produce and prepackaged foods** and then label them with a permanent marker. Use only the designated bags for each type of item.

Meat: In addition to labeling, choose a bag to use for meat that is easily identifiable and different from your other bags. A different color or type of bag for meat will help you avoid accidentally putting it in your produce bag. Wash the meat bag when you get home from the store.

Produce: Use a reusable bag for produce and make sure to wash your bag and the produce when you get home.

Prepackaged Foods: Once you have separated produce and meat bags, everything else can go in bags marked for prepackaged foods. These bags should also be washed routinely.

Brought to you by the Minnesota Grocers Association

