

Nutrition News

Department of Human Nutrition



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Does “Green” Mean Clean?

Reusable “green” cloth grocery bags are becoming more mainstream and growing in popularity, but user beware. Bacteria may be present inside and on the outside of your reusable bag.

When transporting food, keep food safety in mind. Juices from meats can leak from packaging and contaminate ready-to-eat foods like fruits and vegetables in the cloth bag. A good rule-of-thumb is to put raw meat in a separate plastic bag before packing in reusable bags, or use a separate cloth bag for meats. Look for thermal-lined cloth bags to transport cold and

frozen foods. Unpack and put these foods away first when arriving home.

Where do you place your reusable bags while putting groceries away? The outside of the bag may be contaminated from the grocery cart, the store counter or from the floor of your vehicle. If you set the bags on the counter when you get home, the germs on the bag are now on your countertops. Remember to wash and sanitize your countertops before preparing food. Keep book bags, purses and grocery bags away from the food preparation site.

When shopping for reusable cloth shopping bags, look for ones that are washable and remember to launder bags often. Flat-bottom bags make filling with groceries easier and wide straps provide support when carrying bags from the store.

Sales of reusable bags are rising, but buying the bags is just the first step. Remembering to take the reusable bags into the store with you is the next step, and keeping those bags clean is an ongoing goal.

Sources: NDSU Extension Service, Food Wi\$e, #216, January 2009. <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/qa-prp6.html>

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office.

The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet.

To find out more, call toll-free 1-888-369-4777.

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