

The Green Notebook

Wash those reusable bags

Here's an easy New Year's resolution: get out all of your reusable bags and give them a good washing. Repeat every few weeks. Easy enough, right? You will be doing yourself a favor as a study done last year found that the whopping majority of bags they tested were chock full of bacteria.

A study done by researchers at the University of Arizona and Loma Linda University found that, of the 84 bags they tested for bacteria, half of the bags contained coli form bacteria and 12 percent were contaminated with E. coli bacteria.

Washing the bags regularly can prevent this problem, but nearly all the shoppers interviewed admitted to not regularly, if ever, washing their bags. (I'm guilty—I think I've washed mine once). In addition to washing the bags, the report suggested these measures as well:

- don't store the bags in the trunk of your car as the higher temperatures can promote bacteria growth;
- separate raw foods from other food products in the bags;
- don't use bags used for groceries to carry other things like books or clothes.

The study was funded by the American Chemistry Council last summer right around the time of the debate over a California bill that would ban single-use plastic bags. That bill, California Bill AB 1998, was rejected although multiple cities in California have passed bans on the bags.

So if you are resolving to be healthier this year with diet and exercise, include regularly washing your reusable bags and best wishes for a healthy 2011!

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