

Health Awareness



Wash Your Grocery Totes To Minimize Health Risks

(NAPSA)—Nearly everyone has a reusable grocery tote, but only 15 percent of Americans regularly clean their eco-friendly bags—and that could create a breeding zone for harmful bacteria.

According to the Home Food Safety program, a collaboration between the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association) and ConAgra Foods, it's a smart idea to clean totes on a regular basis.

“Using unwashed grocery totes can cause cross-contamination when juices from raw meats or germs from unclean objects come in contact with cooked or ready-to-eat foods like breads or produce,” says registered dietitian and Academy spokesperson Ruth Frechman.

“Food poisoning affects 48 million Americans a year, but it can be prevented with practical steps, such as cleaning grocery totes and separating raw meats from ready-to-eat foods when shopping, cooking, serving and storing foods,” she added.

Frechman says to make sure all bacteria are eliminated by frequently washing your grocery tote, either in the washing machine or by hand with hot, soapy water; cleaning all areas where you place your totes, such as the kitchen counter; storing totes in a clean, dry location; and avoiding leaving totes in the trunk of a vehicle.

“In the store, wrap meat, poultry and fish in plastic bags before placing in the tote and use two different totes for raw meats and ready-to-eat foods,” says Frechman.



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She also stresses it is a smart idea to use two cutting boards at home: one strictly to cut raw meat, poultry and seafood; the other for ready-to-eat foods, like breads and vegetables.

“Keep cutting boards separate, and wash them thoroughly in hot, soapy water after each use or place in the dishwasher,” she says. “Discard any old cutting boards that have cracks, crevices and excessive knife scars.”

Cross-contamination also happens in your refrigerator when you place raw meats on the top shelf and juices drip onto produce, says Frechman. “An easy solution is placing raw meats, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf and keeping washed produce in clean storage containers instead of original packaging.”

Visit www.homefoodsafety.org for additional safety tips on how to avoid cross-contamination and food poisoning, and contact a registered dietitian for more help by visiting www.eatright.org.