



855-724-9400

## Connelly Law Offices, Ltd. Certified Elder Law Attorney

# Keep Your Reusable Bags Clean!

If your jurisdiction has banned the disposable plastic shopping bags and you have switched to the reusable bags, the question is, when was the last time you washed them?

Did you know that medical experts estimate that there are nearly 76 million cases of foodborne illnesses annually in the United States. Most of these originate in the home due to improper cooking or handling of foods — and your reusable bags, if not cleaned, can cause cross contamination of foods.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states that these illnesses can be especially severe, perhaps deadly, for high risk groups—the elderly and those with poor immune systems.

Even more concerning, these bags can also carry and transmit the norovirus, a leading cause of gastrointestinal disease linked to more than 19 million illnesses each year in the United States.

**NOROVIRUS:**  
YOU DON'T WANT IT.



### Tips For Using Reusable Grocery Bags

1. Use leak proof, easily washable bags for meats, seafood, poultry and fruits and vegetables. This is to avoid cross contamination. Most retailers will have small plastic bags in these departments to keep these items separate.
2. Check your bags after every shopping trip and replace them if they cannot be cleaned.
3. When buying reusable bags, make sure you get a special “cooler bag” to keep your refrigerated and frozen foods safe for the trip home.
4. Purchase some “ice bricks” and use them when you go to the store. Even if it is just a twenty minute drive, traffic is always heavier during summer months and it may turn into an hour trip. Be prepared.
5. Use the wipes that retailers provide to clean your shopping cart.
6. Never put any fruits or vegetables that will not be peeled before consuming directly into your cart. Put them into a small plastic bag provided at that department.
7. Don't leave your groceries in a hot car while you are out. If you have several stops, make sure the grocery store is the last one.
8. When you get home, make sure that you unpack those items needing refrigeration or freezing first and store the appropriately.
9. Do not store your dirty reusable bags in the car between shopping trips. You are just asking for trouble.

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### **How To Wash Your Reusable Bags**

First, it is important to understand that not all reusable bags are created equal. Make sure you read the label on the bag for directions on appropriate cleaning. No label? Well, here are some tips:

- ◆ **Cotton** reusable grocery bags and many hemp reusable grocery bags are machine washable in cold water—making them the easiest to wash.
- ◆ **Polyester** reusable grocery bags can be machine washed, but we only recommend machine washing 'poly-canvas' bags. As with anything made from 100% cotton, these bags can shrink and wrinkle with machine washing. To limit this, wash in cold water and air dry.
- ◆ Wash **jute bags, recycled PET bags, and non woven polypropylene** reusable bags in a sink filled with warm, antibacterial soapy (preferably antibacterial) water. Let them air dry completely, both inside out AND right side out. This ensures all the seams, nooks, and crannies are dry and aren't retaining any moisture that can turn into mold.
- ◆ **Nylon or poly-nylon** reusable bags should also be hand washed in warm soapy water and hung to dry—again, inside out and right side out to ensure all the moisture is gone on the inside.
- ◆ **Laminated** reusable bags (either laminated polypropylene bags or laminated recycled pet bags) should be wiped down with a wet cloth or "washed" with a disinfectant spray. Other non-fabric reusable shopping bags can also be cleaned this way.

*Thanks to Bulletin bag Website, Scarborough, Maine*

**CLEAN YOUR  
REUSABLE  
BAGS**



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